

THE
BELIEVERS DUTY
Towards the
SPIRIT,
And The
SPIRITS OFFICE
TOWARDS
BELIEVERS;

Or, A *Discourse* concerning
Believers not Grieving the Spirit,
AND
The Spirits sealing up Believers to the
Day of Redemption.

Grounded on *Ephes.* 4. 30.

By *Henry Hickman*, B. D.

Hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is in us, Rom. 5. 5.

The Spirit it self beareth witness with our Spirit that we are the Children of God, Rom. 8. 16.

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A
PREFACE
TO THE
READER.

Christian Reader,

HOW needfull it is to have a right belief of the Holy Ghost, appears not only from the Ancient Creeds, which in how few words soever comprehended did alway make mention of Him; but also from the wretched Socinians, who Blasphemously denying his not onely Diety, but also Personality, and in their Catechism roundly asserting the no necessity of any operation of his in order to our assenting to the Gospel, have been so filled with a Spirit of Delusion, that they retain not Truth enough to denominate them either Christians, or Hereticks. The Text upon which the ensuing discourse is founded, afforded very fair opportunity of proving the Personality and Deity of this blessed Spirit, and of shewing that our Natural Corruption cannot be cured but by his Inhabitation. But contenting my self to wave, or slightly to touch these matters, I mainly insist on our being by this Spirit sealed

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to the day of Redemption; a phrase which (as most others that are metaphorical) hath had the hap to be many ways interpreted. Bellarmine, who seems to have Read Holy Writ onely to serve a design, applies it to that indelible Character supposed by the Romanists to be imprinted on all that are baptized; but how vainly, appeareth

1. By the miserable shift he is put to, before he can find any imaginable foundation for this Chymæra in the words; He is fain to Read with the vulgar Latine in the day, though against the Greek and Syriack; yea, and against sundry Latin Manuscript Copies, as Estius tells us: yet this very writer, Ephes. 1. 13. when he thought it would be more for his turn, forsaking the vulgar Latine which readeth in whom believing, flyeth to the Greek, after ye believed.

2. Besides, how absurd is it, that any indelible Character or Cognizance of Christianity should be imprinted on all in Baptism, when as we see that many after Baptism do utterly and maliciously renounce Baptism, and all the Principles of Christianity.

Other Pontifician Writers, do refer the Phrase not to the Sacrament of Baptism, but Confirmation. So Estius; so our Country-men the Rhemists, who have this note on Ephes. 1. 13. Some refer this to the grace of Baptisme; but to many Learned in seemeth, that the Apostle alludeth to the giving of the Holy Ghost in the Sacrament of Confirmation, by signing the Baptized with the sign of the Cross and holy Chrisme. But they are well told by the judicious Dr. Fulk, That the Learned Men they speak of must needs be Masters of the new Learning, for the ancient Learning had no such Interpretation,

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pretation, instancing in *Chrysostome*, *Ambrose*, *Theodoret*, *Augustine*, *Primasius*, *Hierome*, *Occumenius*, *Theophylact*, who carry the Text quite another way. All Protestant Writers are not agreed what may be intended by this Sealing of the Spirit: (sure it is for our credit that we can allow our selves to differ one from another in expounding a place of Scripture.) I refer it not to the Holy Ghosts Regenerating or Renewing us, but to his assuring us of the Adoption of Sons, his creating in us a sense of God's Paternal love towards us, and of our filial love towards him: in so doing, I follow not only sundry Learned Sons of our own Church, but also *Cornelius a Lapide*, whose Comment on Ephes. 1. 13. being translated is this, "As by the
"impression of a Seal, the Letters of Kings and Publick Tables are Sealed, that those which are Authentick may be distinguished from doubtful, those that
"are Genuine from false, and it may be certainly manifest, that these are the Letters and Tables of the
"King. So ye Christian Ephesians, as it were The Epistle of Christ, written not with Ink, but the
"Spirit of the Living God, not in tables of stone,
"but in the fleshly tables of your heart, are signed
"with the Holy Ghost as it were with a Seal, that it
"may be manifested that ye are the not feigned, but
"authentick Epistle of Christ, that ye are truly the
"People and Church of the true and high God. Having thus discontended on the Text, he frames against himself this Objection, "If this be so, then may Believers be
"certain that they are in the true Faith and grace of
"God; and for Answer, denieth the consequence, "because this Seal is not altogether and physically certain and evident to the eye, (for who certainly knows,

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“ who dares swear that he is sealed with the Holy Ghost
“ as with a seal) but only probable, and morally, as it
“ were, certain from signs and conjectures; so in like
“ manner it is not to them clear and certain that they
“ are in the true faith and grace of God. For the further
clearing of this doubt, He refers us to what he had said
on Rom. 8. 16. Consulting him on that place, I find
him to give this note: “ That the Testimony of the Spi-
“ rit by which he witnesseth that we are the sons of God,
“ is not certain with certainty of Faith, nor cer-
“ tain with infallible certainty, as Catharinus and
“ Cajetan would have it, but only with a conjectural
“ certainty, which certainty yet increaseth with Holiness:
“ so that Vega, and Ruard, and Pererius, following
“ them, think, that some Men very holy, without the
“ special Revelation of God, from the signs and effects
“ of the Holy Ghost, which they find in themselves very
“ frequent, clear and efficacious, have a certainty, not
“ indeed infallible so as they dare swear that they are
“ in the grace of God, but yet such and so great as ex-
“ cludes all fear of the contrary, not only from the af-
“ fectiō and confidence, but also from the understand-
“ ing and perswasion, so as such do as certainly know
“ and believe that they are in the grace of God, as we
“ certainly know and believe that there is such a place
“ as Constantinople or Alexandria.

Let the Papists read this, and, if they have not lost
all ingenuity, acknowledge that some eminent Writers
of their own go as high or higher than we do: For we
do not say, that we are certain with a certainty of faith,
that we are sanctified or pardoned; or if any do so
say, it is only a Philosophical mistake; for they do not
intend, that it is to any one revealed by any vocal or
written Testimony that he is sanctified or pardoned, but
only

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only that seeing these Conclusions do arise from Premises, the one whereof is Scripture, though the other be known only by inward sense, therefore the Conclusion may be of Faith; so that they make such Conclusions to be of faith, not immediately, but only by consequence, and that on supposition, That a Proposition certain from inward sense, is stronger then a Proposition certain from Divine Revelation, which is not universally true: Nor yet do we say, that this testimony of the Spirit doth make us infallibly certain; only we say, that it makes those who keep Consciences void of offence, and are zealous of good works, have such a certainty as is not mixed with any actual tormenting doubt or fear, so as they can, their hearts not accusing them, nor having any ground to accuse them of Presumption, call God Father, and Christ their elder Brother, and the Spirit their Advocate: Yet after all this they will not swear that they are the Children of God; or if they should, they would thereby do an act sufficient to darken all the evidence they before had of their Adoption; for no one hath power to require such an Oath, nor can any controversie be ended by such an Oath, which could not be ended without it; otherwise we do swear in sundry matters in the which we have not a greater or so great an evidence as it is possible for a Man to have of his Adoption. And in all Churches there is either from the Parents or other Sureties required, as oft as Children are baptized, an abrenunciation of the World, Flesh, and Devil; and when the Baptized Children come to be adult, and receive Confirmation, 'tis required of them, that they profess before the Bishops and all the Congregation present, "That they do renew the solemn Promise and Vow that

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“ was made in their Name at Baptism, ratifying and
“ confirming the same in their own Persons, and ac-
“ knowledging themselves bound to believe and to do
“ all those things which their Godfathers and God-
“ mothers then undertook for them. Vid. Engl. Li-
turgy of the last Edition.

Now if so be persons could not be satisfied that they are sincere in their resolutions, we should by calling them to make such Vows, but teach them to dissemble and play the hypocrites.

Object. But do not some of our Divines speak of an immediate testimony of the Spirit ?

Answ. They do : But it is to be hoped that they mean no more then that the Soul is sometimes more then usually meet to receive the Seal of the Spirit, more then ordinarily disposed to give in its witness with the witness of the Spirit of God, i. e. sometimes it hath so abased it self before God, or done acts so apparently tending to God's glory, so manifestly contrary to flesh and blood, that it cannot upon the least reflection but discern the well-pleasingness of such actions unto God, and consequently take comfort in them. If they intend more then this by their immediate testimony, they must not blame others, if they say they understand them not, or that they fear they understand not themselves. Should any one hear a voice saying to him, Thy Sins are forgiven ; yea, should he not only hear such a voice, but also see some glorious Creature uttering that sound, this would be an extraordinary testimony ; but before a Man either could or ought to receive it, and take comfort from it, he must first have some rational evidence that the Apparition or voice is from God and not from Satan, who both can and frequently hath ap-
peared

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peared and spoken not as from himself, but from God. We have in Scripture an example of Zachary punished because he did not believe the words of God's Angel, Luk. i. 20. there being sufficient evidence that he was an Angel of God, and nothing in the Message that should render it incredible. But we have also an Example of a Prophet more severely punished for believing one that pretended a Message from God, whose Message had every thing in it that might make it unlike to be from God, 1 Kin. i 3. 18, 22, 23. Wherefore to every young Convert, who not patient to wait for his Assurance in a way of self-reflection and communing with his own heart, looks for any thing like a vocal Testimony, I may say as did Gregory to Gregoria, who had written to him, that she would not let him alone till he had obtained a Revelation that her sins were pardoned, Rem & difficilem, postulas & inutilem. A difficult thing, because it is not like that God in these days should so manifest his love; and unprofitable, because I should have as much ado perhaps to distinguish that voice, as to discern the sincerity of my own actions. Consult History, and it will be found, that where one hath been mistaken that did search and try his heart and ways, hundreds have been deluded by voices, apparitions, impressions. These delusions have been most frequent among the Romanists, the sense whereof made Luther, not many years before crept out from among them, to say, Pactum feci cum Deo meo ne vel visiones, vel somnia, vel etiam angelos mihi mittat, Com. on Gen. cap. 38. I have agreed with God that he send neither Visions, nor Dreams, nor Angels.

*Videat cui ad
manus non
sunt Gregorii
Epistolæ A
Lapide in 8m.
ad Rom. v. 16.*

Object. Do not very eminent Divines say, that
Faith

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Faith is general or special, and that general Faith is little worth without special Faith.

Ans^w. They do so, and a good and convenient interpretation may be given of that distinction, yea, is given by the learned Dr. Hammond as to all the objects of Faith. But it may not be dissembled, that some of great note have made the essence of Faith to lie in a particular perswasion that a mans sins are pardoned; an error purposely refuted in the ensuing Treatise, and (which I am glad to observe) rejected now almost by all Divines. Indeed it makes us justified before Faith, and therefore tends manifestly to harden unconverted sinners in their unbelief, and puts the maintainers if it upon most horrible shifts in expounding sundry places of Scripture. I instance in one, which I do in the following sheets make much use of; Ephes. 1. 13. In whom after ye believed ye were sealed. Who would not hence conclude, that Faith does, at least in order of nature, if not of time, go before Sealing or Assurance? How can any who placeth Faith in fiducial Assurance bring himself off? But poorly: For Piscator, who is even by Arminius, a Professor of different perswasion from him, much commended for solidity and clearness, Vid. Epist. Ecclesiasticas, will not yield that πιστεύοντες should be rendred having believed, but in the Present, believing: So the Vulgar Latines, credentes, which Estius is faine to excuse by Ampliation, a kind of Licentia Logica, must be the best translation. Besides, we know that God maketh use of the Ministry of men to work faith; but if faith were an assent to this, that John or Thomas is pardoned, it will be hard to explain how any man, who hath not the gift of discerning Spirits, can give any ground of Faith. Would the Papists but as freely censure the errors of their former Writers as we do the errors of ours,

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ours, soon would all the controversies about Assurance come to an end ; but that being an happiness rather to be wished then hoped for, let all less judicious Christians satisfie themselves to know,

1. It is the receiving of Christ that gives us a right to be the sons of God.

2. That he who receives Christ shall be by God owned as a son, whether he know himself to have received Christ or no. The Promises run clear, Whosoever believeth in Christ, shall not perish, but have eternal life, Job. 3. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are those that hunger and thirst after Righteousness, for they shall be satisfied, Matth. 5. The condition of these promises being fulfilled, the promises themselves must be fulfilled, else God should be unfaithful and deny himself: For shall the too hard thoughts, the too humble conceit of a man concerning himself make void the faith of God? God forbid: scarcely among ingenuous men doth any one fare the worse for an excess of modesty; and can the Father of Mercies shut a good man out of Heaven, because that conscious to himself of daily weaknesses and manifold Passions warring within him, and frequently prevailing, he cannot be firmly perswaded of his own goodness?

3. That it is the office of the Spirit to make us to know the things that are freely given us of God.

4. That as he is ready to witness to carnal persons that their ways are ways of sin and wrath, and that they are the men who (except they become new creatures) are marked out for damnation; so he is ready to witness to those who are spiritually minded the truth of their graces, and by that their interest in the promises of Justification, Adoption, Glorification.

5. That our work lieth in making our selves (which yet

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yet we cannot do but by the 'almighty power of the same Spirit) fit and meet to receive this testimony of the Spirit, which meetness we shall then come to, if 1. We well inform our selves about the terms of the Covenant of grace: 2. Have frequent, serious, abiding thoughts about the fulness and freeness of its promises. 3. Giving all diligence, add to faith, vertue; and to vertue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. 4. By reflex acts often compare the frame of our heart and course of our lives with the rule. 5. Watch and pray, that we may be free from that *αὐθάδεια καὶ πείνησις*, pride and prejudice, which make us though so sharp-sighted as to see a mote in our brothers eyes, yet so blind as not to see a beam in our own eyes.

That thou mayest (Christian Reader) have some small help in all these matters was the end aimed at in making the following Treatise thus publick. The Authors name could not make it more acceptable, and is therefore concealed; but his prayers are, that it may be effectual to beget in all those in: whose hands it shall fall, 1. A tender care not to grieve the Spirit of promise, by which they who believe are sealed ~~up~~ to the day of Redemption. 2. A cordial respect to all those upon whom the Spirit of the Lord is, and who are by the Lord anointed to Preach good tidings to the meek, and sent to bind up the broken hearted: to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oyl of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

Jan. 25. 1664.

Farewell.

Ephes. IV. 30.

And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of Redemption.

THESE Words are by some conceived to contain an absolute Independent counsel, but the Greek Scholia's suppose them to be brought in as an Argument to enforce the immediately preceeding dehoration, *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth*: as if the Apostle had said, If you think it a small matter, to allow your selves in such speeches as have no tendency to Edification, as are no way fit to *minister grace unto the hearers*; If you have no respect to your own Souls, nor to the Souls of others, which must needs be offended by such unprofitable communication, yet you will have some regard for the Spirit of God, who is himself holy, and the Author of all Holiness; and he being, as he is, grieved by all unprofitable discourse, you will account your selves engaged to abstain therefrom. If we receive this connexion (as why may we not, sith it offers no violence to the Context, and is backed with so good Authority) then may we observe in the Text,

1. A Reason by which the *Ephesians* are taken off from Idle Words, lest they should grieve the Spirit.

2. A description of this Spirit from his

} *Nature*
} *Office.*

Grieve not the holy Spirit of God. The form of speech seems to be borrowed from the Old Testament, *Isa.* 63. 10. *They rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit, therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them.* But notwithstanding we have found out a parallel place, yet must we still inquire,

Quest. 1. *How the Spirit can be said to be grieved? for seeing he is God, and so infinitely perfect, how can we conceive him capable of grief, which is not ouely a Passion, but also of all Passions the meanest, and lowest, as arising from the sense of some present evil which we cannot master?*

And this Objection is the more considerable, because of the emphaticallness of the Greek word *λυπᾶτε*, which, saith *Arctius*, *complectitur omnis generis dolores*, and is therefore used to set out that anguish and sadness of mind which our blessed Saviour did feel in the Garden, *Mat.* 26. 37.

But all this notwithstanding, we may give a very fair account of the Phrase; for,

1. *There are, who by the Spirit of God do understand the renewed part of Man; and indeed it is not unusual in Scripture for God to call his own work by his own Name; now the renewed Soul,*
whether

whether our own, or others, is capable of being vexed in a proper sense : but this sense seems not here intended ; yet this I must tell you, that God interprets all that is done against his Children, as done against himself ; and therefore do you beware how you grieve the Lords holy ones, either by saying, or doing any thing, which you know their Souls cannot but abhor : Perhaps it grieveth not some of your Souls, nor grateth on some of your Ears, to hear the Name of God taken in vain, or blasphemed, or the good ways of God spoken against ; but true Believers are of another temper, *Psal. 42. 10. As with a Sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me, While they say dayly unto me, where is thy God.* 2 Pet. 2. 8. *Lot vexed his righteous Soul from day to day with the unlawful deeds which he saw and heard in Sodom and Gomorrah.* Wherefore Sirs, be not ambitious to strike Father and Sons at one blow ; let it suffice that you dishonour God, but do not dishonour him at such times and places, when and where his Saints may stand by, and see and hear the wrong and dishonour that is reflected on their heavenly Father.

2. *We may be said to grieve him, when we do that which would grieve him were he capable of grief.* The Scripture calls not things according to success, and event ; *He that looks on a Woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery in his heart,* though he never act that brutish lust, *Mat. 5. 28. He that hateth his brother is a Murtherer,* 1 John 3. 15. not that every one that hateth doth properly

ly kill ; but that he who hateth his brother, had undoubtedly killed his brother, could his brother have been thought to death ; his hatred would have brought forth murder, had not something strangled it in the Womb. So we do by the Spirit ; we do that against him, which would grieve him, and more then grieve him, were he capable of being grieved or any way altered for the worse. O Man ! take it from me, *every time thou sinnest Presumptuously, thou dost what in thee lieth to annihilate the fountain of all Essences ; thou dost what thou canst to leave the World without a God.* He will be in Heaven maugre all the malice of Men and Devils, no thanks to them ; were he capable of being deprived of Life, they by their Sins had deprived him of Life long since. Hence he complains, that he was broken in pieces by the whorish heart of *Israel*, *Ezek. 6. 9.* So true is that of the Schoolmen, that *omne peccatum, is, deicidium.*

3. *We are said to grieve the Spirit of God, when we make the Spirit of God so to carry it towards us, as Persons do towards those that have grieved them.* If by any unworthy carriage I have vexed my Friend, he intermits all acts of Friendship and Familiarity ; So doth the Spirit, when any thing is committed contrary to his Nature or Offices, withdraw his benigne Influences and Consolations, which are better then Life. I judge, as do the generality of Reformed Divines, *that the Spirit of God doth never forsake those totally whom he hath once chosen for his Temple.* “ In this we know
“ we

“ we are not deceived, nor can we deceive you,
 “ when we teach, that the Faith whereby ye are
 “ sanctified cannot fail, it did not in the Prophet,
 “ it shall not in you. They which are born of
 “ God do not sin any such sin as doth quite ex-
 “ tinguish Grace, clean cut them off from Christ
 “ Jesus: because the Seed of God abideth in
 “ them, and doth shield them from receiving any
 “ irremediable wound; saith the judicious Mr.
 “ Richard Hooker, Sermon of the Certainty, &c.
 pag. 545, 546. But *de non existentibus et non ap-
 parentibus eadem est ratio*, the Spirit may, when
 grieved, so dwell in a Man, as if he did not dwell
 in him; he may be quite gone, as to any present
 sense and feeling: he was so as to David, which
 made him pray, *Create in me a clean heart, and
 renew a right Spirit.*

Quest. 2. *Why are we rather said to grieve the
 Holy Ghost, then the Father, or the Son?*

Ans. No question we do by sin grieve the Father
 and the Son, as well as by every Renewed act of Re-
 pentance we do minister joy to them. Every wilfull
 sin is an high affront to the thrice Blessed and
 Glorious Trinity, Psal. 78. v. 40. *How oft did
 they provoke him in the Wilderness, and grieve him
 in the desert, Psal. 95. vers. 10. Forty years long
 was I grieved with this generation.* But the Divine
 Persons, though agreeing in their common essence,
 are distinguished by relations and operations, or
 rather by their manner of Operation; the Father
 being unbegotten worketh of himself, the Son
 from the Father, the Holy Ghost from both Fa-
 ther and Son: Hence, though all works termi-

nated on the Creature are common to all three Persons, yet each work is most commonly ascribed to that Person whose manner of Subsistence doth most eminently appear in that work. " It is
 " the appropriate work of the Holy Ghost, to
 " reveal unto us the Mystery of Godliness, to
 " make application of the Death and Resurrecti-
 " on of God the Son; and therefore when we
 " do any thing contrary to the Doctrine which
 " is according to Godliness or unworthy of the
 " Death of Jesus, we cross the Spirit in his work,
 " and so are said to grieve him.

Quest. 3. What are the special sins by which we do more eminently grieve the Spirit.

Ans. If the question were put concerning the general Nature of the Sins by which the Spirit is grieved, soon might it be resolved; for it seems to be past all controversie, that we grieve him not by Sins of dayly incursion, nor by meer unavoideable Infirmities, such as by the measure of Grace vouchsafed on this side Heaven we cannot escape; but by Sins that are in some degree deliberate and wilfull: But seeing it is put, concerning the special kinds of deliberate Sins which are most grievous to the Spirit, it will deserve a larger Answer. I say therefore, the Sins that are more then ordinarily grievous to the Spirit are such as these.

1. All the *πάθη τὰ ἀτιμία*, All those Lusts of Uncleanness, whether Natural or Unnatural; the living in these is called *walking according to the flesh*, which we know is made diametrically opposite to *walking according to the Spirit*, by whose help

help we are to mortifie the deeds of the flesh. This kind of Sin hath something in it peculiar; for whereas all other Sins that a man doth are without the Body, he that committeth Fornication sinneth against his own Body, 1 Cor. 6.18. *A*

Græcis sexcentæ dantur huic loco interpretationes, saith Clarius: That *Vid. Dr. Feat- by in locum.*

Interpretation which seems most

proper is, that other Sins, though acted by the Body, and leaving an ill impression on the Body, yet have not that force over Mans Body as to enslave it to another, which yet Fornication hath; for by Fornication the Fornicator is made a Member of the Harlot, seeing Mans abuse cannot dishonour the Institution of God, by which two are made one flesh. Now to take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an Harlot, is that the Apostle could not think of, without abhorrence, *vers. 15.* but there is also Sacrilege in this Sin, because the Body unto which it is so Injurious, is the Temple of the Holy Ghost, *vers. 19.* To pollute the holy place, was a crime of that magnitude that the Jews thought it sufficient to stir up all the People to lay hands on Paul, when he was but supposed to be guilty of it, *Acts 21. 27, 28.* What outcries do the Papists make against *K. H.* the VIII. for pulling down some consecrate Places, after they were become receptacles of idle drones, and witless and worthless Creatures? and yet these very Men do make Fornication a venial sin, and trick of youth; but let them mince the matter as they please, we are sure, that if any Man defile the Temple of God, him God

shall destroy, 1 Cor. 3. 17. VVhen there were no Christian Magistrates to punish this sin, God gave his Church a power, to *deliver the unclean beasts that were guilty of it to Satan, for the destruction of the flesh*, 1 Cor. 5. 5. Bodily Torments as well as Soul Agonies, did then attend Excommunication, which, in its own nature, separated from all such attendants, is not to be thought on without trembling, as being the Churches giving up a Man to the Devil to do with him what he will. *Excess in drinking* also is very contrary to the Spirit, and that as it doth dispose to this sin of uncleanness; so much we may collect from Ephes. 5. 18. *Be not filled with Wine in which is excess, but be filled with the Spirit*. Here are plainly Two Propositions, and a Reason assigned of the first: the Propositions are, Be not filled with VVine, Be filled with the Spirit; and there's an opposition betwixt these two implied in the Particle *ἀλλὰ*: but, as for the cause, *in which is excess*, its not to be taken for excess in drinking, for then the sence will be a little incommodious,

*Vid. Zanch.
& Dr. Hammond.*

Be not you drunk with VVine, in which being drunk with Wine, there is Drunkenness; *Ασωτία*, therefore here rather signifies excess of VVerry and Brutish Lusts, the usual effects of following Wine and strong Drink, and the common attendants of the Heathenish Feasts, if not integral parts of them, yea, and of the Jewish *feasts* too when they were become Idolatrous, 1 Cor. 10. 7. *They did eat, and drink, and rise up to play*; where *παίζων* may, and perhaps must

must signifie dancing in a light, youthful, lascivious manner. Fornication, and all uncleanness are so unbecoming Saints, that they are not so much as once to be named by them, *Ephes. 5. 3.* Therefore every filthy obscene word, yea, and every unclean thought, if morose, must needs be grievous to the Spirit, whose dwelling in Saints makes them to be Saints.

2. The sins of *Anger, Malice, Bitterness*, and which flow thence, *Strife, and Divisions*: These are commonly numbred among Spiritual sins; but I am sure that the Apostle doth reckon *Hatred, Variance, Strife, Seditions, Envyings*, among the fruits of the *Flesh*, *Gal. 5. 20, 21.* and that he doth call the *Corinthians* carnal, because there was among them, *envying, and strife, and divisions*; one saying, he was of Paul, another he was of Apollos, *1 Cor. 3. 3, 4.* 'Tis thought by some, that the *Corinthians* did not make Paul and Apollos the Heads of their Parties and Factions, but that the Apostle doth, by a Figure, transfer this unto himself and Apollos, that they might collect, that if it were so foolish and carnal to glory in them, endued with Extraordinary Gifts, it was much more foolish to glory in those ordinary Pastors, by whose Names they did call and distinguish themselves: How carnal is it then for one to say, I am of *Aristotle*; and another, I am of *des Cartes*? In reference to which Parties I need not say, Was *Aristotle* Crucified for you? Were you Baptized into the Name *Cartes*? but, Doth there, in neither of their Writings, occur so much as the Name of Christ Crucified? Cer-

tainly, so to admire the Tenents, either of the one or the other, as to vilifie and deny the parts of those who close not with them, is very unbecoming any that profess to be led by the Spirit. But let us allow these sins to be called Spiritual, as in a sense they may, that makes them onely *Minoris scandali*, less scandalous, not *Minoris malitiæ*, less wicked; if Uncleanneſs and Drunkenneſs make a Man like a Beast, theſe make him like a Devil: If, as the School-men ſay, that in ſome Creatures there be the foot-ſteps, but in others the Image of God; ſo we may be allowed to think, that in ſome ſins be to be found, not onely the Foot-ſteps, but alſo the Image of the Devil, 'tis as much in theſe ſins as in any other; *Be angry and ſin not, let not the Sun go down on your wrath, neither give place to the Devil,* Ephes. 4. 25, 26. The order of the words implieth, that ſo much place as we give to Anger, ſo much place we give to the Devil. To be ſure, theſe ſins are ſo contrary to love, which though it be not as *Lombard* thought, the eſſence of the Holy Ghoſt, yet is one of his chiefeſt fruits, that they muſt needs hugely grieve him. If a contentious Woman be a continual dropping in a very Rainy day; and if any Wiſe Man would chooſe rather to dwell in the Wilnerneſs, then with a contentious and angry Woman; How can the Spirit think you delight to dwell with thoſe Salamanders that are never well but in the fire of Contention, and count themſelves not to be in their Element any longer then they are wrangling, and diſputing perverſely about
sub-

substantial forms and qualities, or about matter, motion, and atomes?

3. The *slighting the divinely inspired Writings, or ministration of the Spirit*, and preferring thereunto the VVritings of any Men whatsoever. If a person had taken much pains, and put together all his Learning to set out some one Treatise, and should find, after it was published, that Men neither read it, nor much enquired after it, whilst the Pamphlets of some others were greedily bought up, VVould not this grieve him? And must not then the Spirit, *after he hath revealed unto us the deep things of God, the things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, the wisdom of God in a mystery, the wisdom which God hath ordained before the VVorld*, he grieved, if Men shall more value and converse with those VVritings that can onely contain excellency of Speech, and enticing VVords of Man's VVisdom?

Object. *But can any professing Christianity so do?*

Ans. Yes; St. *Augustine* confesseth, there was a time when he despised the simplicity of the Gospel-stile, *Confess. lib. 3. c. 5.* So doth *Hieron*, somewhat his Senior; *ad Eustochium de custodienda virginitate.* And *Bradwardine* acknowledgeth, that before it pleased God to touch his Heart, he did very much despise St. Paul's Epistles, because they did not *Sapere ingenium Metaphysicum.* And you know what is commonly reported of *Angelus Politianus*, that he should say, He never bestow'd time worse then once when he vouchsafed to Read over the *New Testament*;

yet is he said to have spent several years in enquiring whether the famous Latine Poets name should be written *Vergilius* or *Virgilius*. *Boxbor-nius* indeed endeavours to wipe off this aspersi-fion ; but *Peucer* plainly tells us, that he did not stick in exprefs terms to say , That whatever was in *Davids* Psalms , was more clearly and sweetly in *Pindar*. What need I speak of the School-men ? *Lombard* indeed is observed not once to have the Name of *Aristotle* in all his Books ; but the Sententiaries and Summulists so adored him, that they did not stick to take their Texts out of his *Ethicks* : and that they might not seem to be mad without reason, they gave out, That as *John* was *Christ's* Fore-runner in Spirituals, so was *Aristotle* in Naturals. Just as now we are told, that *Cartes* did VVrite his Meditations by Inspiration, which made *Fabricius*, a Scholar of *Regius*, complain, That his Philosophy made Men slaves to anothers lust, and that his Follow-ers accounted him an infallible Master, and per-petual Dictator. But why do I speak of these ? Bishop *Usher* would complain, That he could rise sooner on the *Monday*, then on the *Lord's-day*. And is it not too evident, that Students flock in greater Companies to an Oration or Philosophy-Lecture in the Schools, then to the Reading or Preaching of the Divine Oracles in the Churches ? Alas ! Do Angels vouchsafe you their presence in Humanity Lectures ? Do they delight them-selves in Metaphysical Speculations ? VVhy they are present at Christian Assemblies, and desire to pry into the Mysteries of the Gospel, 1 *Pet.* i. 12.

Is Philosophy now become the Power of God unto Salvation? Or is that which to *David was sweeter then the bony, and the bony-comb*, become now like the VWhite of an Egge, in the which there is no favour? Did *Luther* say, That he cared not if his own Books were burned, lest they should hinder Men from Reading Scriptures? And can we find in our Hearts to let the *Bible* lie by us unread, unstudied? Sure it must needs grieve the Spirit, to see the *ministrat*ion of the Spirit thus undervalued; the Doctrine according to Godliness, which is profitable for all things, as much disregarded as it were profitable for nothing. *Hierome* tells us, how an Angel came and cuffed him, so as he felt the blows some time after, because he did so much dote on *Tully*; and that he was told, *Non es Christianus, sed Ciceronianus*: May not we also fear, lest, though not an Angel, yet our own Consciences should smite us with a *Non estis Christiani sed Cartesiani*? And let us not think that these lashes will be avoided, though we do study Scriptures, if we study them onely in subservience to our other Studies: To Read the Scriptures, onely to pick out the Criticisms in it, or to find out the Phrases that make for or against the Annual or Diurnal Motion of Sun or Earth, is but to play with the Two-edged Sword of the Spirit, and sure it is not good jelling with Edge-tools.

4. *The robbing of the Spirit of his Glory, and taking unto our selves the Praise of what we are, have, or do.* When *Virgil* had made an excellent

lent Copy of Verses, and a paltry Fellow had given out himself to be Author of them, Grief and Indignation made him thus to Versifie,

Hos ego versiculos feci tulit alter honores

Sic vos non vobis,

Sic vos non vobis, &c.

Why, whether they be Gifts, or Administrations, or Operations, they are all wrought in us by the Spirit: if we, instead of acknowledging this, be so arrogant as to say, Are not these the Gifts that we have acquired, these the Graces that we have Wrought in our selves, these the Good Duties that we have done? we commit such a piece of Robbery, as God will most certainly punish, either by recovering his Lent Gifts, or by permitting us to fall into some foul Sin: our Evil Works for which we are humble, do not do us so much mischief, as do our Good VVorks of which we boast; and if God love us, he will rather let us fall into some foul Enormity, then not Cure us of the Sin of Pride, then which there's not a sin in his eyes more loathsome. Lest any should be offended at such Language, I judge here convenient to fortifie my Reader against Prejudice, by quoting Mr. Hooker, and, in him, St. *Augustin*, writing to the same purpose: "VVhat is Virtue but a

Mr. Hooker's
Sermon of the
nature of
Pride.

"Medicine? and Vice, but a Wound?
"yet have we so often deeply
"wounded our selves with Medi-
"cine, that God hath been fain to
make Wounds Medicinable; to cure
by

“by Vice, where Vertue hath stricken; to suffer the
“Just Man to fall, that being raised, he may be
“taught what Power it was that upheld him
“standing. I am not afraid to affirm it boldly
“with St. *Augustine*, that Men puffed up through
“a proud opinion of their own Sanctity and
“Holiness, receive a benefit at the hands of
“God, and are assisted with his Grace, when
“with his Grace they are not assisted, but per-
“mitted, and that grievously, to Transgress;
“whereby as they were in over great liking of
“themselves supplanted, so the dislike of that
“which did supplant them, may establish them
“afterwards the surer. Ask the very Soul of
“*Peter*, and it shall undoubtedly make you it
“self this Answer; My eager Protestations
“made in the glory of my Ghostly strength, I
“am ashamed of; but those Chrystal Tears
“wherewith my Sin and Weakness was bewail-
“ed, have procured my Endless Joy; my
“strength hath been my ruine, and my fall my
“stay. *Peter* shall rather be permitted, to deny
his Master, then to retain too high an opinion
of Grace received. Detestable is that Pride,
which makes a Man do that which God condemns
in Man; but more detestable is that, which
causeth Man to attribute that to himself which
God gives to Men. A Man is guilty of so much
the worse Pride, by how much the Gifts are bet-
ter for which he is unthankful. Surely God will
deal with these Men as did our King with him
who ventured hard to fetch up the Crown that
was fallen into the Waters, and when he had so
done,

done, put it on his own head; he had a Talent for his Pains, but lost his Life for setting it upon any Head but his Sovereignes: So they shall have honour for contending for the Truth, but their Souls shall God require of them, because they gave not him the glory of all their Zeal. Wherefore, as you would not grieve the Spirit, when you see a Drunkard say, *Who made me to differ*, or say as the Holy Martyr *Bradford* was wont to say, God be mercifull to me a miserable Sinner. When you hear of one denying the Divinity of our Saviour, say, Nor could I have said that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Spirit of God. If either Men or Devil suggest that thou hast done well, say, It was not I, but the Grace of God in me; I have nothing but what I have received, and must not boast as if I had not received, but ascribe all to him who worketh in me both to will and do of his own good Pleasure.

5. *Fathering on him the ugly and monstrous brats of the Spirit, which worketh in the Children of disobedience.* How much was the Mother in *Solomons* time grieved when her Living Child was taken away, and a Dead one laid in room of it? More must the Spirit be grieved, when Humility, Obedience, Subjection to higher Powers, his Natural Issue, are taken away; and, instead of these, Disobedience and Rebellion laid at his door. To do wickedly, and to say that we do it by the impulse of the Spirit, is to make God such a one as our selves; and what a Provocation that is, you may learn from *Psal. 50. 21.* These things hast

hast thou done, and I kept silence, thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one as thy self; but I will reprove thee, and set thy Sins in order before thee. Nor shall they fare better, who do not father their Impieties on the immediate impulses of the Spirit, but yet on the Word revealed by the Spirit. For *causa causæ, est causa causati*; whatever is found in Scripture, is conceived of the Holy Ghost: If we do wrest and torture Scripture to salve our *Phænomena*, we do thereby injure, and lie against the Holy Ghost. This is the honour of Christian Religion, that it can wound all other Religions with their own Weapons and Principles. They rob it of this honour, who go about to fight against it also with its own Sword, quoting Texts of Scripture to Authorize such actions as are perfectly destructive of Christianity. No Sin so hainous as theirs who pretend to Sin by Authority from God.

6. *The ascribing that to the Devil and his Instruments, which is the work of the Spirit.* This is not only to grieve him, but also to blaspheme him. What was the unpardonable Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost mentioned *Mark 3.* but the Pharisees ascribing that to the Prince of Devils, which was done by the finger of God? Every work of the Spirit hath not so clear an impression of the Spirit on it, as had the Miracles of Christ; and therefore to mis-call them renders not ones case so desperate as was the Pharisees: But yet sure, after God hath by the conversion of so many, discovered himself to be in the Mi-
nisters

nisters of the Gospel, of a Truth, for any to say that they were all Literal, Legal, Antichristian, which was the Language of the late times, was a Blasphemy of a very high Nature; and I have observed, that such Men mostly have waxed worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived: nor can I conceive much hopes of their Repentance, who do so far wrong the Spirit, as to ascribe all his works of Conviction and Contrition, to the Predominance of the Melancholy Humor, or to a cracked brain; and all the fervent importunate expostulations of God's Devoutest Supplicants, to Sauciness; such Speeches do greatly dispose to the unpardonable Sin against the Holy Ghost.

We may hence infer against the Judaizing *Socinian*, the Personality of the Holy Ghost. Grief is a Personal Affection. How a Person should be grieved, we can understand; how a Divine Person should have that done against him, which would grieve him, were he capable of grief, is not inexplicable: but how a Quality, a Power, or an Operation, should be grieved is unconceivable.

2. Hence may be inferred, the love and tender care the Spirit hath for us, and of us. Had he not graciously condescended to take on him the Offices of Advocate, Intercessor, Comforter, he would not have so far concerned himself in our miscarriages, as to be grieved for, or by them.

3. If we are not to grieve the Spirit, then sure we are not to Blaspheme or offer despiht unto him;

him ; which cannot be done, but by Sins of the greatest, and most hellish malignity, and in the highest degree wilfull.

4. This will also inform us, what to think of them who take up their Pleasures in Sin, which grieves the Holy Spirit of God ; we may think, that either they never were Partakers of the Holy Ghost ; or if ever partakers, that now he hath quite forsaken them, and an evil Spirit from the Lord hath seised on them. If Christ at his second coming would spare all other Sinners, yet doubtless he will *damn* all those that believed not the Truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness, *2 Thes. 2. 12.*

But the main I intend to dwell on, is the counsell of the Text ; propounded indeed negatively, but yet must be supposed to include in it many affirmative Duties, indeed all by which that good Spirit can be pleased and delighted. I will first propound some motives to perswade Men to abstain from all Sins by which the Spirit is grieved ; they shall be drawn from the Person and Office of him whom they grieve, from their own estate who do grieve him, from the sad and wooll effects of grieving him.

I. Consider *who* it is you grieve. Were he but some created Angel, you ought so far to respect his Ministry, as not to grieve him. The Woman is to keep a covering on her Head, because of the Angels, *1 Cor. 11. 10.* lest the contrary Indecency should offend those pure Spirits. Nay, were He but a Saint compassed with flesh and blood, we must not, no not by the use of a
lawful

lawful thing, grieve him, unless we will walk uncharitably, *Rom. 14. 15.* which would be to break the Bond of Perfection. But he is greater then any Holy Man or Angel, even an uncreated Divine Person. I know this is denied by Socinians, nor do I purpose fully to refute their Blasphemy; only I shall take notice of one Scripture, because it not only proves the Deity of the Holy Ghost, but also sheweth the exceeding sinfulness of doing any thing against him, seeing he is God, *Acts 5. 3, 4.* *Why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Ghost? thou hast not lied to men, but to God.* There are here three assertions: 1. *Ananias* lied to the Holy Ghost. 2. That in so lying he did not lye unto Man. 3. That he lyed unto God. Our Argument lies in the opposition, of which no fair account can be given, if the Deity of the Holy Ghost be not supposed; for if so be the Spirit had been an Essence distinct from God, the Apostle, after he had said, Thou hast lied to the Holy Ghost, would not have said, Thou hast lied not to Men, but to God; but thus, Thou hast lied, neither to Men, nor to the Spirit, but to God. Nor will this Argument be evaded by saying, *ψευδᾶς* in the third Verse is joyned with an Accusative case; and should be Translated, to counterfeit the Holy Ghost; for besides that in some Copies it is not *το πνεῦμα*, but *εἰς τὸ πνεῦμα*, and the propositions *εἰς*, or *κατὰ*, after *ψευδοῦμαι* make it all one as if a Dative did follow; besides this, 'tis most certain, that sometimes with an Accusative it signifieth to deceive or cheat; and it must

here

here so signifie, because this Sin is called a tempting the Spirit of the Lord: How violent would it be to expound that Phrase by counterfeiting of the Spirit of the Lord? Every time we grieve the Spirit of God, we grieve God: And is that a small matter in our eyes? Can there be a greater aggravation of Sin? *If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall intreat for him,* 1 Sam. 2. 25. but this would also further be considered by us, that though there be no difference as to the Essence of the Persons, yet there is a difference in the oeconomy; he that grieveth the Spirit, grieveth that Divine Person against whom alone such a Sin can be committed as is unpardonable: *Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh a word against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this life, nor in that which is to come,* Mat. 12. 32. To Sin against Father or Son, is not so dangerous, as to Sin against the Spirit; because he acting not in his own Name, but in the Name of Father and Son, from both of whom he is sent; to Sin against him, is to Sin against all the Authority of God, all the love of the Trinity, the lowest condescension that Divine Goodness ever did, or can make.

II. Consider we how little the Spirit hath deserved to be thus grieved by us. *Many good works (saith Christ, John 10. 32.) have I shewed you from my Father, for which of them do ye stone me? Many good works hath the Spirit*
from

from the Father and the Son done you, O Christians, for which of them do ye grieve him? Did I say many? I might have said, all: there is no good gift that is either wrought in you, or for you, or by you, but it is to be ascribed to this Spirit. Is Christ precious to you? He was conceived by the *Holy Ghost* in the Womb of the Virgin *Mary*; he descended upon him in his Baptism, and anointed him to all his Offices, raised him from the dead, bears Witness of him, and pleads his cause against the unbelieving sinful World. Is there any sweetness in the Scriptures? why these are all from this Spirit: *Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*, 2 Pet. 1. 21. Are you taken with those admirable Gifts that you see in your Ministers? *All that diversity of gifts is from the same Spirit*, 2 Cor. 12. 4. called all therefore the *manifestation of the Spirit*, vers. 7. Or are you more affected with the works of God in you? they are all the fruits and effects of the Spirit, whether Conviction, or Contrition, or Humiliation, or Regeneration, or Consolation, they are all wrought by the Spirit; this is the Argument made use of in the Text, *Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, by which ye are sealed to the day of Redemption*. In calling him the holy Spirit of God, he meaneth not only that he is of essential, original, indefectible Sanctity; but also that he worketh all the Holiness that is in any of Gods Servants. And when we are said to be by him sealed ~~up~~ unto the day of our Redemption, by that Phrase

is signified, that he doth all that which answereth to the nature and various ends and uses of Sealing. But with that Phrase I am not to meddle as yet; nor list I to run over all his works, but pitch on that of comforting, and press that, to keep Men from grieving him. The Spirit is *the Comforter*, sent from the Father upon the Prayer of his Son, to supply the absence of his corporeal presence, to open those Wells of Salvation, that were hid, and did lie under ground, in the days that the *Messiah* did dwell among Men. In some Churches they have an Officer who is called *Consolator Aggremum*, whose work is to put the breasts of Consolation into the Mouths of those who have received within themselves the Sentence of Death: should any, whilst this Officer is at his Bed-side labouring to take out the sting of Death, vex him with untoward language, and not to give over till he had forced him to depart his Room; would not all say that this Man were either in a Phrensie, or else in the very gall and bitterness of Spiritual Death. The Wickedness of those who do grieve the Spirit of God is far greater. For,

1. This sick Comforter cannot always be with those whom he visits, but is now discoursing with them, and anon gone either to some other languishing Person, or to his own Relations. But the Spirit is a Comforter always abiding with you, *John 14. 16.* Not that he actually consorts at all times, but that he a'ways preserves the root of comfort, alway tenders comfort,

fort, were not Christians either so fullen, or so stupid as not to receive it.

2. The Comforter of the sick may endeavour to comfort, and not be able to comfort; Men may not be so wise as to open to him the root of their fears; or if they do, he may not be able to reach them; or if to reach them, not to pull them out: There are Perplexities of Conscience which will puzzle and non-plus the most experienced Christian or Teacher: But so strong are the Consolations of the Spirit, that they break through all opposition of contrary grief and trouble, whether arising from Afflictions, or guilt of Sin.

3. The sick Comforter may apply Comfort unseasonably, and nothing is more usual then to speak Peace where God speaks no Peace: but the Consolations of the Spirit, are never misplaced or mistimed; he pours not the Oil of Gladness but into broken hearts; he puts not the Garments of Praise upon any, but those in whom hath been the Spirit of heaviness; he applyeth not his strong Consolations to any, but the heirs of the Promise, nor to them neither, but only when *they fly for refuge, and lay hold of the hope that is set before them, Heb. 6. 18, 19.* When they *fly*, as Men pursued by the Revenger of Blood did to the Cities of Refuge, or to the Horns of the Altar.

4. In the absence of the sick Comforter, another may do the work as well perhaps as he: but the Spirit is so a Comforter, as none can Comfort without him; all Consolation therefore

is called the Consolation of the Holy Ghost, *Acts* 9. 31. Whilest the Spirit of the Lord did rest on *Sampson*; he could break Withs and Cords; but the Spirit being departed *Sampson* may go out and shake himself, and think to do as at other times, but he shall soon find a difference; the Philistines shall prevail, lead him away Captive, and put out his eyes. So those who by the help of the Spirit have in former Tribulations been made to rejoice and glory, may think when assaulted afresh to shew like chearfulness; but if by any Sin they have made the Spirit depart, they shall find a little thing too heavy to bear. The loss of a Child, which is but a common Temptation, shall make them cry, and take on, more like Men then like Christians; yea, more like Children then Men. Now, put all these considerations together, and when Corruption next stirs, say, What! shall I grieve my Comforter, my abiding, my strong, my wise, my only Comforter? This question will strangle it in the Womb, if any ingenuity be left in the Soul: If it be grown hard and carnal through the deceitfulness of Sin, then nothing but Arguments drawn from Wrath will work on it.

III. Let it be pondred, who they be that thus grieve the Spirit; all Men are not in a capacity so to do; they that are, have of all Men least reason to do it. *Amyraldus* in his *Theses* about the Sin against the Holy Spirit, hath well observed, that a Man may be considered under a twofold *status* or Relation; one meerly Na-

tural or Legal, having knowledge of Duty, but no Revelation of any Mercy or Pardon in case he Sin; he that in this case sins, sinneth rather against the Father, then against Son, or Holy Ghost; or else, he may be considered as under an Evangelical Dispensation; and that again two ways, either so as only to have heard of Remission of Sins, but not at all to believe it, or be affected with it; he that Sins in this state, Sins rather against the Son, then against the Holy Ghost, or so as not only to have seen the marvellous Light of the Gospel, but also to have been refreshed with its Beams, and made to Rejoice in it; if in this state he Sin wilfully, he must needs grieve the Spirit; but thus to Sin, is to Sin at a very high rate, when a Man hath been made partaker of the Holy Ghost, and tasted of the Powers of the World to come, and of the Heavenly Gift, the Spirit may say, What could I have done more to endear Religion, and inodiate Sin, that I have not done? To grieve the Spirit after all this by returning to folly and vanity, is an affront and dissingenuity not to be suffered, and which shall be most severely punished, either in this World, or in the other, or in both. This leads to the Fourth Motive drawn, from the sad effects and consequents of grieving the Spirit. I will not say with *Luther*, that it may make God to carry it towards Men, *tanquam si non esset Deus ipsorum, sed Diabolus*; nor dare I so much as adventure to English so harsh an expression: but I shall direct to one place of Scripture, in which enough

is said to terrifie us from grieving the Spirit; *They rebelled and vexed his holy Spirit, therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them,* (so far was he from assisting them against their Enemies) and he raised up Enemies against them; and caused Rebels to fall before them. God's Punishments under the Gospel are more Spiritual, not less severe. As for the Temporary Believer, the Spirit being grieved by him may so forsake him, as that the pure Spirit may return with seven unclean Spirits worse then that which was cast out; he may be suffered so to fall, as that it shall be impossible to renew him by Repentance. As for such as by the inhabitation of the Holy Ghost are Consecrated and made Temples of God, I am so strongly perswaded of the Doctrine of Perseverance, that I do not think they ever again become of the Synagogue of Satan, but their grieving of the Spirit may be so punished, as that

1. *They may be permitted to fall into very foul and dishonourable lusts.* He that complieth with the motions of the Spirit, is changed into the Image of God from glory to glory, he renews his strength as doth the Eagle; but give me a Man that grieves the Spirit, he shall in a short time fall into abominable, either Opinions or Practises; and when we do consider how ugly have been the carriages, and how scandalous the Apostasies of some that doubtless were enlightened, and made the highest Profession of Religion, we cannot rest in any other cause of them,

then God's judicial blinding and hardening of them, for vexing his Spirit of Truth and Holiness.

2. *All Ordinances become unprofitable to them.* Promises sometimes sweeter then the Honey and the Honey-comb, have no relish in them. Commands and Threatnings, of which their hearts were wont to stand in awe, now affect them no more then dreadful Tales of Men in another World. Were it not for shame, had they but any handſome excuse, they would not come at Ordinances at all : the Disciples are told, *John* 14. 26. that the Spirit shall bring things to their Remembrance ; by which I would not understand a bare calling them to mind, but a bringing them to mind in their full Vigor, Authority, Evidence. 'Tis the Spirit alone that ſets home Doctrines with Demonſtration and Power ; the Spirit grieved, the moſt weighty Truths are no more regarded then ſo many Idle Dreams, at leaſt no more then are *the enticing words of mans wiſdom* (unto which the demonſtration of the Spirit is oppoſed, *1 Cor.* 2. 4.) the probable diſcouries of Orators, and Philoſophers, which at the utmoſt engender but Opinion, perhaps it is ſo, perhaps it is otherwiſe. Be it ſo, that *the word of God is quick and powerful, and ſharper then any two edged Sword, piercing even to the dividing aſunder of Soul and Spirit, of the joints and marrow,* *Heb.* 4. 12. yet is it thus vital and operative only as it is *the Sword of the Spirit,* *Ephes.* 6. out of his hand it will pierce no deeper then would the Sword of *Cideon* in the hand of an youth. Be it

it so that the Ministration of the Gospel is more Glorious then that of the Law, yet it's greater glory lies only in this, that it is *the ministration of the Spirit*, 2 Cor. 3. 8. The Spirit withdrawing himself, as it may well be thought he will do if grieved, even the Gospel quickneth no more then the killing Letter did. *Moses put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: But their minds were blinded; for untill this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament*, 2 Cor. 3. 13, 14. We think this vail is taken away in the Gospel, and indeed it cannot be denied but that the Pen-men of the New Testament have used great plainness of Speech; but there is still a vail on the hearts of Men, and if the Spirit of the Lord do not take away that vail, (as if he be displeased, usually he doth not) even the Gospel may be hid as much as ever the Law was to the carnal Israelites.

3. Upon the grieving of the Spirit usua'y follow sad heart-distressing doubts and fears in reference to our present and eternal condition. 'Tis the Spirits Office to make us know the things that are freely given us of God, 1 Cor. 2. 12. to witness to our Spirits that we are the Children of God, Rom. 8. 15, 16. to shed abroad the love of God in our hearts, Rom. 5. 5. he is the earnest of our inheritance untill the Redemption of the purchased Possession, Eph. 1. 14. If we grieve him, we are left in the dark, and see no light, and know not whether we go. And how sad is this, to be at such a loss

loss as to say, It may be I shall sit down with *Abraham, Isaac, Jacob*; but it may also be, that I shall make my Bed in Hell with the Devil and his Angels where there is weeping, wailing, gnashing of Teeth? but upon our grieving of the Spirit we are, not only left under doubts, but also under positive apprehensions, that the Wrath to come shall be our Portion. How many have been heard to roar out, I am damned, I am damned? which crys, though they may be acknowledged sometimes to proceed from Melancholy, or other bodily distemper, yet do they more frequently proceed from the grieved Spirit's withdrawing of himself.

You see, whether you are acted from ingenuity, or from fear, there's great reason you should cease from grieving the Spirit, and no less reason is there, why you should not only not grieve him, but also rejoice and please him; the which you shall do, if,

I. *You grieve when he is grieved*, and vex your Righteous Souls at every thing that vexeth him. This is an act of Friendship we all owe to all those that are of the same body with us, *Rom. 12. 15.* much more to him *by whom we are all baptised into one body*, *1 Cor. 12. 13.*

II. *If you bring forth all the fruits of the Spirit*, i. e. all manner of Holiness, but more especially those mentioned *Gal. 5. 22, 23.* Love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. When we bring forth these, we not only live in the Spirit, but walk in the Spirit; which whoever do, *fulfill not the lusts of the flesh*,
Gal.

Gal. 5. 26. *are not desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.* And let it be observed, that the Apostle reckoning up the fruits of the Spirit, doth not instance in Prayers and Supplications, though they, when made with Faith and Humility, are undoubted Evidences of the Spirit's dwelling in us; but in meekness, gentleness, love, and such other Passions as are opposite to sinfull Passions: for by *goodness* we are to understand in this place, *kindness*, and *friendliness*, or a readiness on all occasions to do good to others: And by *Faith*, not that which is called Faith on our Lord Jesus Christ; but *fidelity or faithfulness* towards Men, opposed to Treachery and Inconstancy. Believe it, to take all opportunities of doing our brethren good, to be punctual in performing our Promises, patiently to bear all the Injuries and Provocations that are offered us by others, and studying as much as in us lieth to preserve Peace with all Men, are greater Evidences that a Man is Spiritual, then are long Prayers, or any thing of that Nature, by which some of late have been so much puffed up. Believers have the Spirit in them, and they are said to be in the Spirit, *Rom. 8 9.* As he that is born of the flesh, is flesh; so he that is born of the Spirit, is Spirit; and therefore, as they who are in the flesh, do in nothing please God, do in all times and places mind the things of the flesh; so they that are in the Spirit, they should do all things to please the Father, they should Spiritualize their very Natural and Civil actions, doing them unto the glory of God.

God. So shall Nature as it were be adopted into Grace, and every Meats Meat become an holy and acceptable Sacrifice.

III. *If we pray to him, and for him, and bless God for all the good things wrought in us by him.* We should *pray to Him*, else how do we acknowledge his Deity? How do we stick to our Baptism, in which we were Baptised into his Name? We should *pray for Him*, else how do we look upon him as the great gift and promise of the New Covenant? We should *bless God for Him*, or else how do we prize the benefits bestowed on us, and wrought in us by him? Shall we bless God for some single good things, and not for the Spirit, who is every good thing, (as appears by comparing *Mat. 7. 11.* with *Luke 11. 13.*) that were an high indignity offered to this Divine Person! That we may do all these the more enlargedly, it were good often to meditate how great a condescension it is in the Spirit, to dwell where he hath the Flesh alway lusting against him; to help us in all our Infirmities; to make Intercession for us with groans that cannot be expressed; to apply unto us the Redemption purchased, and make us meet for the Inheritance of Saints in Glory.

IV. *If we honour his gifts in others, especially those which are bestowed for the work of the Ministry.* 'Tis the Holy Ghost which separates Men to the Office of the Ministry; and when Men are put into that Office, they do receive the Holy Ghost, therefore they ought to be
honoured

honoured and had in esteem, for their Office and work sake.

Obj. *But doth not the anointing teach us all things, and so teach us as that we need not that man should teach us at all?*

Ans. So indeed it is said, and that by some pretending so much to the Spirit, as that their usual compellation to others is *Flesh*; but we are not to believe every Spirit, but to try the Spirits whether they be of God: and I heartily wish the Spirit from whence this Objection ariseth, did not too manifestly discover it self not to be of God.

The Spirit that Christ promised, was to be sent from the Father in the Name of Christ, and was not to speak of himself, but whatsoever he had heard, he was to receive of Christ, and glorifie Christ, *John 16. 13, 14.* But the Men who make this Objection do dishonour and decry Christ, setting up Christ within them in opposition to him that suffered at *Jerusalem*: the Spirit inspired Prophets, Apostles, Evangelists, to deliver down unto us a Rule of Faith and Life; but these Men do vilifie this Written Word, and Ministration of the Spirit, and call on their Profelytes to follow that light within them, and make that sufficient for Salvation. For my part I am so far from desiring that any should envy for our sakes, that I could heartily wish that all the Lords People were Prophets, and that his Spirit were on them. Were there a *Seculum Spiritus* to be expected, I hope I should as sincerely pray for it, and as much rejoyce in the

the approaches of it, as another; but so far am I from finding in the Scriptures any time in which the Ministry shall cease, and be useles, that I rather find the Spirit is to be received by the *bearing of Faith*, and that it is one great work of the Spirit, to quicken and give Life to the Publick Ordinances as dispensed by the Ministers of the Gospel; 'tis the *Holy Ghost that maketh them overseers of the flock*, Acts 20. 28. As for that place, 1 John 2. 29. it carrieth it's answer in it's own Bowels, *You shall not need that any one teach you, but as the same anointing teacheth you*, (i. e.) not other things, nor in another way then the same anointing teacheth you; but do any Ministers pretend to teach other things, or in another way then this anointing teacheth? If they do not, as it is most certain they do not, why is this Scripture so frequently urged against Ministerial Teaching? For ever let us abhor those who cry up the Spirit, so as to juggle out that form of sound Words which hath been delivered unto us by Men guided by the Spirit; Be sure you *quench not the Spirit*, but have a care you *despise not Prophecys*; God having put those two counsels together, let no Man put them asunder.

The *Spirits* Office towards *Believers.*

Whereby ye are sealed to the day of Redemption.

THE Old Interpreter reads, *in the day of Redemption*; and by it *Oecumenius* and some others understand the day of Baptisme: but because in the Greek 'tis not *ἐν*, but *ἐν*, and we have no reason to think that *ἐν* is put for *ἐν*, we shall by this day understand the day of Judgment, as most Interpreters do, and as we are led to do by that twin-place, Chap. 1. 13, 14. where the Holy Spirit of Promise is said to be, *the earnest of our Inheritance until the Redemption of the Purchased Possession*: The Price of a Believers Redemption is already paid, and accepted by God, and they are redeemed from their vain Conversation; but their day of Redemption cannot be said to be fully come, till this Corruptible have put on Incorruption, at least, not till this life be ended; for till then

1. Their Redemption from the Power and Dominion of Sin hath not its full effect: even a *Paul*, as long as he is in the Body, hath occasion

to complain that he is sold under sin, and that the Law in the Members warreth against the Law of the Mind, and leadeth him Captive to the Commission of Sin, and Omission of Duty.

II. Till then, our Redemption, *the forgiveness of Sin*, Ephes. 1. 7. is not perfect. I know that upon our first closing with Christ, our *Transgressions are blotted out as a mist, and as a thick cloud, and our Iniquities thrown into the bottom of the Sea, there is no Condemnation to us, no obligation to Eternal Wrath*; but yet I am also sure, that we are bid *repent, that our sins may be blotted out when the days of Refreshing shall come from the Lord*, Acts 3. 19. Whence it may be inferred, that a Penitents Sins are not so blotted out, as then they shall be blotted out; indeed, upon the first Conversion, a Man is put into a state of Justification, which is inconsistent with obligation to Eternal death, yet is he not freed from all Punishment, nor from all obligation to Punishment, for where there is no obligation to Punishment there is no Justice in Punishing. The want of the Spirit is one of the Punishments we have brought on our selves by Sin: this Punishment is not taken away, but by restoring of the Spirit; now though the Spirit be so restored, as to prevent the Dominion of Sin and Damnation for the time to come, yet is He not given in such a measure as to prevent all Sin, nor the contracting of new guilt; not shall He be so given in this World.

III. As to the Redemption of the Body, that is so far from being compleat before the Great Day, that till then it may seem not to begin : While it is joyned to an Imperfect Soul 'tis vile and mortal ; when separated from it, then it becomes yet viler, is thrown into a grave, and preyed upon by Worms and Maggots : At the Resurrection it begins to be Spiritual, Incorruptible, Powerful, and like to the glorious Body of Christ Jesus. The Adoption, the Redemption of the Body, we do not now enjoy, but by Faith and Hope we do wait for it, *Rom. 8. 23.* On all these accounts, there is reason why that Day should be called, as it is, *The manifestation of the Sons of God, Rom. 8. 19.* For though we be now the Sons of God, it appears not what we shall be, *1 John 3. 1.* The best use that can be made of this Appellation, is that which is made of it by the whole Creation ; *The earnest expectation of the Creature waiteth for this manifestation, that it may be delivered from that bondage and vanity unto which it is subject, and under which it groaneth ; much more should you, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan within your selves, waiting for the adoption.* 'Tis utterly a fault among Christians, that they groan so much under the burden of a few Taxes and Impositions, and so little under the burden and body of Sin which they carry about with them. They should much and frequently bless God for those Enjoyments they have of him in this Earthly Tabernacle ; but yet not be so satisfied with any such Enjoyments, as not to desire it may be dissolved, and so they put into

the Possession of that house ^{from} in Heavens not made with hands. *We that are in this Tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon,* 2 Cor. 5. 4. I confess, in this I look on St. Paul as our Pattern, rather then as our Standard: I dare not say, that all who are partakers of the Spirit do thus earnestly groan after absence from the Body, and presence with the Lord; but all have reason so to do, else had not all by Christ been taught to Pray, *Thy Kingdom come.* As for you who live in Sin, I cannot exhort you to desire this day; rather you may pray as did the Primitive Christians, though on a better account, *Pro mora finis*; for to you this Day of the Lord shall not be a day of Redemption, but of Confinement to the darkest dungeon; it shall *burn as an Oven*, it shall burn you up, and leave you neither Root^r or Branch: The Devils who believe it, do tremble at the thoughts of it; and if you tremble not at it, it is because you believe it not. The best and most reasonable advice I can give you, is, to kiss the Redeemer, and to follow God with sighs and groans, till he hath given you hearts soft as wax, then shall you also be *sealed to the day of Redemption.*

Of this *Sealing of the Spirit* I am now to speak, and that somewhat largely: being therefore to build high, it is good to dig deep, and lay the Foundation sure. The Expression is undoubtedly Metaphorical, and must betoken something that bears proportion to Sealing properly so called: What that is, we should the rather

quire, because the Metaphor is so frequently used here, and *Chap. 1. 13.* and *2 Cor. 1. 22.* He that shall read the Learned *Zanchy* on *Chap. 1. vers. 13.* will not lose his labour, nay, will think nothing can be added unto what he hath said. I shall from him and others, in a few words, lend light enough to elucidate this matter to those that have a mind to understand. Two things among us go by the Name of a Seal.

1. The *Signet* that makes the *Impression*.
2. The *Impression* that is made by the *Signet*.

And *Sealing*, if considered in its Nature, is nothing else but the imparting of the Image of the *Signet* to that which is Sealed: But then the uses of *Sealing* are divers; 1. For *Secresie* or *Security* 2. For *Ratification* or *Confirmation*; 3. For *Distinction* or *Separation*: Now the question is, Whether in allusion to the Nature, or some or all uses of *Sealing*, we are said to be Sealed? Doubtless, the Spirit doth work in us so as to communicate unto us the likeness of God in Holiness and Righteousness. By him we are changed into the Image of God from glory to glory, *1 Cor. 3. last.* According to his mercy he saveth us by the washing of Regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, *Tit. 3. 5.* We are born again of water and the Holy Ghost, *John 3. 3.* We are washed, we are sanctified, we are justified, in the Name of our Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God, *1 Cor. 6. 11.* But seeing the *Sealing* here intended is in order of Nature after Believing, *Ephes. 1. 13.* I humbly conceive, it is not the making of the Elect to partake of the Divine Nature, but the assuring of them that

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they

they do partake of it, the perswading our hearts that we have God's mark on us. God Seals us with his Spirit, not that he may know us to be his, but that we may know our selves to be his, and rest satisfied that we are his, and that he will own us for his, when to others he shall say, *Depart from me, I know you not.* I deny not, but we may be said to be *Sealed* by the Spirit, when we are by him regenerated and made New Creatures; but I think Regeneration is rather the Spirits *writing the law in our hearts*, and making us *the Epistle of God*; and that the Sealing in the Text intended, is the Spirits testifying unto us that we are of the number of God's redeemed ones and have a right to the Priviledges of God's redeemed ones. Now there are five things of which the Spirit may be thought to give Assurance. 1. Election. 2. Vocation. 3. Justification. 4. Perseverance. 5. Eternal Life; but because of some of these there is dispute, and because it is by all sober Persons granted, that Effectual Vocation, Regeneration, Conversion are the Evidences of the other; of that chiefly, and well nigh, only, I shall speak, and cast all I have to say about it into an Answer to these six Questions.

1. Whether such Assurance may be had?
2. Whether the Nature of Faith consist in it and whether it may not be separated from Faith?
3. How the Spirit works it?
4. Why so many Christians are so long without it?
5. What

5. What Motives there be to perswade us to labour after it.

6. What means are to be used, 1. to gain it if we have it not, 2. to keep it if we have it, 3. to regain it if we have lost it?

I. In Answer to the Question, *Whether such Assurance may be had*, I say it may, which I prove,

1. By arguing *ab esse ad posse*; Assurance hath by many been attained, therefore it may be attained. That it hath been attained is so evident, that scarce any thing can be more evident; there is not one Saint almost in all the Scriptures, concerning whom much is said, of whom something is not said, from which it may be collected that he had sometime or other good Assurance of God's Love. Was *Job*, think we, without Assurance, who maintained his Integrity against the Devil, and his Uncharitable Friends, clubbing their Wits to prove him an Hypocrite? Was not that the Voice of Assurance, *I know that my Redeemer liveth*? Was not *St. Paul* assured, when he so triumphed in Christ? *Rom. 8. 38. I am perswaded that neither life, nor death, nor Angels, nor principalities, &c. shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.* The Papists do not much deny but that these Persons, and sundry others mentioned in Scriptures, had Assurance; only they say, they came to it in an extraordinary way, by immediate Revelation; which must needs be looked on as a meer evasion and shift: there is not in Scripture the least hint that these came to their Assurance

in any extraordinary way, but many things there be in Scripture which make manifest, that they attained their certainty in a discursive way, arguing from the effect, to the cause; from the Fruits, to the Root; from their mortifying the deeds of the flesh, and walking according to the Spirit, to the Spirits dwelling in them. St. Paul indeed had his Revelations, but those were not the ordinary standing lasting ground of his gloriation, but "*the testimony of his Conscience that in simplicity, and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, he had had his conversation in the World,* 2 Cor. 1. 12. What that, we are bid by St. Peter to *give all diligence to make our calling and election sure,* 2 Epist. 1. 10. Which implyeth that Assurance is not only to be expected by extraordinary immediate Revelation.

2. If we cannot have Assurance, 'tis either because we cannot be sure what puts us into a state of Grace, or because we cannot be sure that we are in that state of Grace. To say, that we cannot know what puts us into a state of Grace or makes us Children of God and Disciples of Christ, is too great an absurdity for the Papists themselves to swallow; it doth indeed make the one half of the Scriptures needless, for what doth Scripture more design, then to lay down the distinguishing marks betwixt Sincerity and Hypocrysie, Faith and unbelief, the Power of Godliness and the Form? It will therefore perhaps be said, that we may know what true Grace is, but we cannot know our selves to have true Grace wrought

wrought in us, because of the deceitfulness of our hearts. Now that the heart of Man is deceitful, deceitful above all things, will not be denied by any who either studieth Scripture or his own heart. But we may well say, that the deceitfulness, whether natural or acquired, is in part cured and removed by Sanctifying Grace, and the Spirit also doth assist (as is more to be shewn hereafter) the Sanctified Faculty to observe and take notice of its own frame; and therefore, its remaining deceitfulness notwithstanding, it may come to some certainty of its own condition. To make short, I ask, Was Conscience designed by God to be a Witness, and a Judge, did he intend it should sometimes Justifie, sometimes Condemn? If he did not design it to any such Work or Office, why then all, both Heathens and Christians have mistaken its Nature and Office; if he did, why then may not a Renewed Conscience witness concerning a Mans Renewed and Justified Condition? Doubtless it may witness and give such a Testimony as God will own hereafter, and Man may for the present comfortably acquiesce in. “As from our hearts condemning us, we may infer that God will condemn us; so from our hearts not condemning us, we may collect, that God will not condemn us; and that with such firmness or certainty, as will give us boldness in the presence of God, and assure our hearts before him that we shall have the things we ask of him, 1 John 3. 20, 21. Had the Testimony been so obscure and uncertain as Papists make it to be, St. Paul

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would

would not have so rejoiced and gloried in it, as we before observed him to do, from 2 Cor. 1. 12.

3. If no Assurance were attainable then some duties enjoined us would be altogether either unprofitable, or impossible; I instance in two or three: Why are we bid to *search and try our ways*, if it cannot be known whether they are right? Why are we bid to examine our selves *whether we be in the faith*, 2 Cor. 13. if it cannot be known *whether we be in the faith*? How should we *rejoice in the Lord*, and *glory in Tribulation*, if when we have done all, our Title to Heaven must be uncertain, if we may at last for ought we know to the contrary, have our Portion in the Lake that burns with Fire and Brimstone?

Set a Man upon a very high Pinacle, and let him know he may fall from it, and see whether you can perswade him to rejoice; the possibility, and much more the probability of any danger that is intolerable, must needs damp all joy. Much less could a Christian be earnest and vehement in his desires to be dissolved and be with Christ, if he could have no sure hope that when he is dissolved he should be found in Christ. Why hath God set Promises as thick in the Word as Stars in the Firmament, if by no means we can clear up our Interest in them? If the sweetness of all the Covenant were strained into one single Promise, what would that avail me, if by no means I could be perswaded *one* that I shall own day be permitted to taste of it.

Th^s

This Argument did horribly puzzle *Bellarmino*; and in answer to it he recites three Opinions of Catholicks, (as he calls them) according to none of which, he thinks, Men will be left under any necessity of doubting concerning their Reconciliation with God; and at last he tells us, that all they contend against, is only a certainty of Faith, properly so called: but we are wiser then to lay the stress of so material a question upon a School-phrase. Let it but be granted, that the Soul can have such a knowledge of its own sincerity, as makes it certain that it is not mistaken, we shall sit down under the shadow of that concession, and eat the sweet fruit of it, leaving it to the *Tridentine* Doctors to determine whether this may be called Faith Catholick; and if not, whether yet it may not be called Divine Faith, differing from Catholick Faith; differing not in certainty and exclusion of doubting, but only in universality. I must needs say, I understand not how any Man can be said to believe that he believes; and if any of our Writers have so expressed themselves (which is more then I know) they spoke not properly. “ *Wendeline*, “ in his larger *System* of Divinity, propounding “ against himself this Objection, as from the “ Papists; What is certain with the certainty “ of Faith, is either expressly contained in the “ Word of God, or by due consequence may “ be thence deduced: But that this or that “ Man, I, or thou do truly believe, is not expressly contained in Scripture, nor can by any “ due consequence be thence deduced; therefore it

it cannot be certain with a certainty of Faith ; doth well answer, The conclusion doth not contradict us ; for we do not in kind say , that we can by a certainty of Faith be certain that “ we truly believe, but indefinitely, that we “ may be certain. With what certainty then ? “ I answer with a certainty of inward Vision, or “ the Testimony of our Mind enlightned by the “ Holy Spirit, who witnesseth to our Spirit, “ that we are the Sons of God, and do truly be- “ lieve: This certainty therefore is not writ- “ ten in the Book of Scripture, but in the Book “ of our Heart, and that by the finger of the “ Spirit. Hence we believe not that we believe, “ but see, feel ; As we do not believe that we “ do think of God, but know and perceive by “ our Mind : quoting for the confirmation of “ his answer, an elegant Sentence of St. *Augu-* “ *stine*, lib. 13. *De Trin. Fidem suam quisque,* “ *qui eam habet, videt in corde suo, & tenet certi-* “ *ssima scientia, & clamante conscientia.* In which way if he had proceeded in answering the self same Objection concerning particular Remission of Sin, pag. 1158. he had given the Adversary less advantage ; for my part, I do not make it any Article of my Faith that my Sins are Pardoned.

4. We argue the attainableness of Assurance from the Weakness and Rottenness of the Grounds on which the Papists, the greatest Adversaries of this Truth, do proceed in the denying of it.

1. 'Tis not unlike, that the Covetousness of the Pope and his Clergy is one reason why the Doctrin of Assurance is so denied: For this Sect of Men is somewhat a kin to *Judas, who was a Thief, and carried the Bag*. Were the Pope to pay as much for redeeming a Soul out of Purgatory, as he commonly gets by it, I dare say, Purgatory before this had been reckoned amongst things that are not: were they to loose as much Gold and Silver by keeping Men in doubts and fears as commonly they get, certainty had not been made so impossible as now it is.

2. Their own Hypocrisie and Formality makes them, and that justly, to question their own state present and to come, and therefore they think that none, how sincere and upright soever, can be assured of these matters. Very apt we be to measure other Mens Cloth by our owu Ells, to make our own Hearts and Experiences a standard and pattern to our fellow Christians. Many eminent Reformers, who had perhaps the Candle of the Lord mostly shining on them, and lived perpetually under the Beams of his Countenance, did place Faith in Assurance, and so discouraged some weak Christians. The Papists on the other hand, being alway void of Assurance; would needs perswade us, that no Faith did ever rise up to Assurance, being continually tormented with shivering fears, they envy all others who have more serenity and calmness then themselves. But doth it follow, that if an House built on the Sands cannot stand,
that

that it cannot stand neither though built on the Rock? A Papist, as a Papist, holdeth no one Doctrin by Faith; for seeing, as Papist, he must needs take the Popes infallibility in causes of Faith for his Foundation, which Foundation being not only untrue, but also Heretical, cannot be apprehended by Faith, it follows, that he neither doth nor can believe any point of Faith, unless perhaps the conclusion can be of Faith, when the premises or cause of assent to that conclusion is contrary to Faith. Nor can they have any certainty of their Salvation; for that depends with them on their having the Sacrament of Penance truly Administred, and this on his being a Priest that doth Administer it: now that any one is a Priest, is that of which there can be no certainty; for, for ought any one knows to the contrary, he that Ordained him had not intent to Ordain him, or he that Baptised him had no intent to Baptise him; or if both could be known to have directed their intentions aright, yet twenty other things might happen that would nullifie his Priesthood. But no necessity is there that Protestants should be uncertain of their right to, or meetness for Heaven, who reject all these Errors, and are taught to believe, that no Man shall ever fare the worse for what never was in his Power to prevent.

3. Papists much object the multitude of Professors, who have much boasted and talked of Assurance, and yet neither had it, nor could have it, as by their manifold miscarriages, inordinate walkings, they have most manifestly discovered.

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This no doubt they may have observed, and it hath been, of late years especially, a great stumbling block to some, to see and hear Persons of very slight and frothy Spirits, tell so many and so high stories of their Enjoyments and Experiences. But shall we say, that a Man may not be certain of that, about which multitudes have been mistaken? Who sees not then that we must bring Pirrhonisme into the World? Put our selves under a necessity of turning Scepticks? Because some have fancied their Chambers to be full of Company, when no Person was nigh them, cannot I be sure that sometimes I see People sitting in their seats to hear me? Because some have imagined that they sat about richly furnished Tables, when no Meat was nigh them, cannot I therefore be sure, that my Meat is before me, and give God thanks for it. There is no such great likeness betwixt Assurance and Presumption, that a Man, if he will be sincere, need mistake the one for the other. The Rules given by Divines to distinguish them, are such, that a Man cannot be mistaken about them, unless he have a mind to be mistaken.

1. Presumption is the daughter of Ignorance, so is not Assurance.

2. Presumption is got and maintained without any difficulty or pains, so is not Assurance.

3. Presumption, unless in great Extremities, when usually it turns into despair, is alway uniform and like unto it self, so is not Assurance, which is higher or lower, according to the Influences of the Spirit, growth and exercise of the habit of Faith.

4. Pre-

4. Presumption is unwilling to be examined, so is not Assurance, but most gladly joyns with the most lively and searching Ministry ; by these and many other Characters which shall be after suggested, Assurance may as easily be discerned from Presumption, as may the true Metal from that which doth but Counterfeit it.

4. It is much urged that Assurance would breed Pride, Security, Carelessness, the bane of all our Graces and Pious Endeavours : but to this many answers may be returned.

1. By Concession ; it will not be denied, but that if God should pour this Wine into old Bottles, there might be danger of their breaking ; if he should give these Apples to those who were never sick of Love, they might breed Wind : but God never gives the New Name, but where he gives the New Nature ; He sets not his Seal on a flint, but on the wax ; *In whom after ye believed, ye were sealed with the Spirit of promise, Ephes. 1.*

13. As for Unbelievers, they are incapable of it ; and could they have it, they would turn it into wantonness, as they do all Grace they receive : nay, nor doth God set his Seal on every Vessel of Honour ; He doth not feed every Child with hidden Manna, but only such as he finds to hunger after it, and to be ready to faint and perish without it.

2. I say our Assurance is not perfect or free from all doubts, but hath alway mixed with it some either actual or habitual fear. Perfect Assurance might (such is the Corruption remaining in us) be abused to security, and occasion
Pride ?

Pride ; but our Wine is mixed with Water, on purpose, that it might not intoxicate us. With such a measure of Assurance we are trusted, as keeps under doubts and fears, not with such as quite expels doubts and fears. They go too far, who say, That the Assurance we have of the Pardon of our Sins, and right to Eternal Life, is equal to the Assurance we have of the common objects of Faith, Christs Resurrection, or Gods Omnipotence. That *Christ is risen*, that *God is Almighty*, are Propositions and Principles that are expressly and immediately contained in Scriptures, and therefore do the more easily gain assent from our Understandings : But these Propositions, I am *Justified*, I am *Sanctified*, I shall be *Saved*, are Conclusions drawn from such Premises of which only one is contained in Scripture, the other is made out by inward sense and feeling, and therefore the Conclusion is not so evident, nor so strictly *de fide*, as is either a Scripture principle, or any conclusion that is drawn from premises purely Scriptural.

3. I do utterly deny, that Assurance, as Assurance, doth breed security and negligence ; but rather in a meet subject it quickens to diligence. For what ? are not the Angels in Heaven assured of Gods Love ? Do they not more then opine or conjecture, that they shall never fall away from it ? yet, I trow, they do not therefore grow negligent, but continue to be Ministring Spirits, ready pressed to go whether soever God sends them. Indeed were it so that Assurance either of Faith, or of Pardon did breed slothfulness naturally

naturally and necessarily, a Man would be afraid to grow in Grace ; for undoubtedly, the more growth in Grace, ordinarily the more Assurance; the faster hold I lay one Christ, the greater evidence that I have him, the stronger the habit of Faith is, the more vigorously it acteth, and the more certainty it carries along with it, that it is sincere and unfeigned : now if this Evidence and certainty were such as did of its own Nature minister to Security and Negligence, better it were that I should content my self with the Faith and Love of a Child, then of a grown and perfect Man.

II. In answer to the Second Question, *Whether Faith do consist in Assurance*, I answer by laying down this Proposition.

Faith consists not in Assurance either that a Man loveth God, or is loved of God, or that God hath pardoned him, or will save him; yea, true Faith may be in him, in whom there is no such persuasion.

This Proposition seems most clear to me; yet I may fear it will not down with all, because some are used to the definitions of Men of very great Name, who make a Christian Mans Faith to be a Perswasion that Christ died for him and hath procured the Pardon of his Sins, and the Salvation of his Soul. Which Phrases are in themselves capable of a good construction. Every Believer is perswaded that Christ hath procured Remission of his Sins, and Salvation to be bestowed on him in God's way, and upon God's terms and conditions; but they expound themselves

selves thus, That it is of the Nature of true Faith to make a Man perswaded, that Remission of Sins is not only by Christ obtained for him, but also applied to him, and that God by an unchangeable decree elected him to Eternal Salvation. Now this is an error, and such an error as though it hath had too many followers; yet hath alway, especially in *England*, met with some to oppose it, as appears by Mr. *John Foxe's* Treatise *De Christo gratis justificante*. But till of late no Man took so much pains strenuously to refute it, as did Mr. *John Down*, in Vindication of his Sermon from the Exceptions of Mr. *Nathaniel Baxter* sometimes Lecturer of the City of *Bristol*. The Arguments he then made use of, are so strong, that I need not put my self to the trouble of excogitating new ones, but shall as to the substance of what I say, Plow with his Heifer.

1. This Perswasion and particular Application they speak of cannot be Faith, because it is frequently lost. This Argument holds strong againg those who deny that true Faith can be lost, (such are all with whom I now deal) unless they will say, that the Perswasion of God's special Love is never lost, which is contrary to manifest experience. For had not *Heman* the *Ezrabite* lost it, when he cryeth out, *Psal. 88. v.*

3. *My soul is full of trouble, and my life draweth nigh unto the grave, I am counted with them that go down into the pit, I am as a man that hath no strength, free among the dead, thy wrath lieth hard on me, thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves.* How many

have we our selves known delighting themselves with Spiritual Suavities, filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory? yet within a short time down in the mouth again, questioning whether ever they had the Spirit, whether all that in which they blessed themselves were not a meer delusion.

2. Faith cannot be this Perswasion, because some true Believers never did, never can attain unto such Perswasion. I instance in those who do maintain Principles quite inconsistent with it, viz. *Lutherans*. This is plainly acknowledged by *Laterman*, a *Lutheran* Divine of *Regiomount*, for the which Concession he is censured and condemned by some of his own Party, by none more bitterly then by *Walther*, but certainly without a cause; for by the Principles they proceed upon, no Man ordinarily can be certain of his Election, or Perseverance, till he be breathing out his last Breath: let them frame what practical Syllogismes they will, it will be found, that either the *Major* is false or the *Minor* doubtful and uncertain, as will appear to any who will but take the pains to form all the Answers by which *Brockman* labours to quiet the Conscience of one doubting concerning his Election, *loco de Præd. pag. 689.* into Syllogisms; He there bids a Man be certain of his Election that finds himself to love Christ, and diligently to endeavour the Reformation of his Life, thence the Syllogism will be. He that loves Christ, and diligently endeavours to amend his Life, is ordained to Eternal Life; I love Christ and endeavour dili-
gently

gently to amend my life, therefore I am ordained to Eternal Life : Is the *Major* here true or false ? if it be true, then it is their error to say that love to Christ is not proper to the Elect ; if it be false, what becomes of the conclusion inferred from it. If it be said, which is all they can say, that if a Man can feel in his heart a sense of God's Love, he may thence infer a conditional certainty of his Election, *viz*, If he shall persevere in his Love, that is no more then what the non-Elect may have. Suppose we one of them to know that he is a Believer, yet cannot he thence infer that he is Elected, or shall persevere to Eternal Life, because he neither thinks true Faith to be proper to God's Elect, nor to have any Promise of certain Perseverance made to it : to say that none of these Brethren are true Believers, is the highest uncharitableness, for what Scripture is it saith, that it is essential to Christianity, to be rightly informed concerning the Connexion of Faith with Election ? Or where is this Doctrin so clearly revealed in the Word, as that all must needs be supposed to be wilfully blind who will not see and acknowledge it.

3. This Perswasion is in order of Nature after Faith, therefore the Nature of Faith cannot lie in it. The Antecedent is presently proved, because I must first be in the favour of God, which I cannot be but by Faith, 'ere I can know or be perswaded that I am in the favour of God ; for a Proposition is alway in order of Nature true, before it is known to be true, as every

Mans Reason doth tell him. And this order, as it hath its foundation in Reason, so also in Scripture: 1 *John* 5. 13. *These things have I written to you that believe in the Name of the Son of God, that ye may know ye have Eternal Life.* Bellarmine saw this, and therefore infers, that according to the Opinion commonly received among Reformed Divines in his time, Men are Justified before they do Believe: and methinks the Learned *Chamier* doth not like himself, when he goes about to untie this knot, for he saith, that Faith doth, if not in order of time, yet of Nature, follow Justification; a saying contrary to the whole current of Scripture.

4. If Faith did consist in this Perswasion, it would follow that some who do hear the Gospel, either were not bound to Believe, or were bound to Believe a Lie. That any who hear the Gospel should not be bound to Believe, cannot be, for then Unbelief would be no Sin to them; and if no Sin, then could it not deserve Condemnation; when as we know from Scripture, that it is the Condemning Sin: And that some, if obliged to believe that either they are Elect-ed, or Justified, would be bound to believe a Lie, is as plain; for certainly, among those that hear the Gospel, some are not chosen, nor pardoned. But what is more absurd, then that any Man should be bound to believe a Lie? Can any thing be the object of Faith but what is true? or any thing the object of Divine Faith, but what is so true that it cannot be false?

More need not be said against this Error. But it will be asked, whether, though the Nature of Faith do not consist in this Assurance, yet it be not that which every Believer doth some time or other find ? or whether any Child of God do so walk in darkness, as that the light of God's countenance is never lifted up on him, no not before his death.

This I shall endeavour to answer by the following conclusions.

1. No question, as the Sun, after it hath for all the day been hid in the Clouds, doth sometimes shew it self and that gloriously just before it sets ; so the Faith of a Christian, after it hath for the greatest part of his Life been clouded with doubts and fears, doth near unto his death sometimes so manifest it self by some lively acts, as that he can no longer doubt of its sincerity, but cries out my Lord, my Saviour. In that little experience I have had in the World, I have known sundry who have all their Life been subject to fears, and filled every Minister and Christian of their acquaintance with dreadful complaints against themselves ; who yet, when they have been on their death-beds, or have apprehended themselves so to be, have triumphed over death in the Apostles Language, *O death, where is thy sting ? O grave where is thy victory ?*

1 Cor. 15. They that are in the least conversant in our English *Martyrology*, cannot but know how usual it was with God to seal up his Love to his Servants just when he called them out to set their own Seals to his Truth ; so high was their Assu-

rance, that you would have thought that they had heard the Musick of the Cœlestial Choire, when they heard the ratling of the chains with which they were to be tied to the stake. When Mr. *Robert Glover* was condemned to die, and was now at a point to be delivered out of the world, it so happened, that two or three days before, his heart being lumpish, and destitute of all true consolation, he felt in himself no aptness, but rather an heaviness (I all along use Mr. *Fox* his own words) and dulness of Spirit, full of much discomfort, to bear the bitter Cross of Martyrdom ; whereupon fearing in himself lest the Lord had utterly withdrawn his wonted favour from him, he made his moan to a Minister, complaining how earnestly he had prayed day and night, and yet could receive no motion nor sense of comfort from God : but so soon as he came to the sight of the stake, he was so mightily replenished with God's holy comfort and heavenly joys that he cryed out, clapping his hands, *Austin*, (that was the name of the Minister to whom he had complained) *He is come, he is come.* The Apostles that did alway bear about in their Bodies the dying of our Lord Jesus, that were alway delivered unto death for Jesus sake, had also the life of Christ made so manifest in them, that though they were troubled on every side, yet they were not distressed ; did so constantly and assuredly know, that he which raised up Jesus, would raise them up also by Jesus, and that their light Afflictions which were but for a moment wrought for them a far more exceeding eternal!

eternal weight of glory, that they did not faint, but rather waxed more bold by their bonds. The same Truth might also be compassed about with a cloud of Witnesses of such as did die a Natural Death: But that work is done to our hands by *Melchior Adam*, and others, who have delivered to us the story of the Life and Death of Men famous in their Generations for Piety and Learning. Ye, so usual is it with Christs Disciples to have their inward Man renewed day by day, when their outward Man perisheth, that the Psalmist speaks indefinitely, *Mark the perfect Man, and behold the upright, for the end of that Man is peace, Psal. 37. 37.*

II. Sometimes it falls out quite otherways; those who in their Life time have had much enjoyment of the sense of God's love, and through it have comforted themselves and others, have yet died with little, if any, Assurance, or actual comfort; this God suffers for many holy, wise ends and purposes; as,

I. To quicken others up to the greater Preparation. When Death is at a distance, we are apt to think it is but an easie thing to die: But when we shall see that the approaches of Death have startled and grievously affrighted those whom we ever judged to excel us in Grace, we must needs, if not fast asleep, begin to look about us, and to consider, whether we with our weak imperfect Graces are able to meet with that Prince of Terrors? and the more importunately to pray for, and depend upon some strength greater then our own.

2. God may permit it judicially, for the hardning of Profane Worldlings and Carnallists; who seeing some of their loose Companions to go out of the World like Lambs, *to have no bands in their death*, *Psal. 73.* to depart quiet, peaceable, confident, void of impatience, despair, or fear; and others, who have made greater Profession of Godliness, and endeavoured after greater exactness, die under many troublesome, disquieting thoughts, presently conclude, that all which Conscientious Ministers press upon their followers, is but unnecessary sowerness, and melancholy simplicity. God counts not himself any way engaged to remove such stones at which he foresees such self-deluding sots will stumble and fall, and never rise more; rather he may seem on purpose to order it so, that they who will get no good by his Servants Life, shall receive no benefit by their Death.

3. As a Punishment to his Servants for their declinings and fallings from *their first love*, a Sin big enough to provoke him to remove his Candlestick from a whole Church, *Rev. 2. 4, 5.* much more not to let his Candle shine on the Tabernacle of some one single Christian, how eminent soever. As *Love perfects its self*, so *fear is cast out*, *1 Job. 4. 18.* but as love weakeneth or declineth, so fear returns and tormenteth. Unto which three Reasons, we may add,

4. Such is the Nature of some Diseases, that they do cloud the Phanſie, and muffle the understanding; and if so, it is no wonder that the best of Men do make false judgment of themselves,
and

and flie away from Death, as if Christ had never overcome it. No wonder that a Mind discomposed with bodily distempers recoils at the sight of Eternity; rather it is a wonder, that a Believer, when he is most himself, can think of that condition without astonishment; so amazing is the contemplation of it to those who are accustomed to measure all actions and perfections by time.

5. The Devil at such a time will be sure to stir up and make use of all his Malice and Subtily. 'Tis said of the Natural Serpent, *non nisi moriens in longum producitur*, 'tis never at its full length till it be dying. The old Serpent never so much shews himself in his full dimensions, as when a Christian is dying; when he is just on the borders of the Heavenly *Canaan*, he will then, if he cannot trip up, yet bruise he heels, that he may enter in halting and uncomfortable; as he would not be tormented before his time, so nor would he that a Christian should rejoyce before his time, hence he casts a mist before his eyes, that he may not see his interest in that place of Bliss unto which he is hastning apace; when his time of tempting is but short, then usually he comes with the greatest fury.

III. I think it is rarely seen, that any understanding Christian, walking closely with God, doth run out the whole course of his Life without some Assurance of the Love of God. 'Tis not likely, that any one should for Months and Years be joyned to the Lord, and made one Spirit with him, and the Lord not let him know that he loveth

loveth him ; in God's ordinary way of working, the Spirit of Bondage doth but make way for the Spirit of Adoption. But yet,

III. 'Tis not impossible, that a Christian should live in Ignorance of his own estate all his days. I do not find, in my best search of Scripture, that God hath any where promised, that every true Faith shall Bud and Blossom, in Assurance, or that he who is a Believer shall sometime or other know himself so to be ; and if God hath made no Promise to Work Assurance some time or other in every one whom he converts, nothing there can be concluded to the contrary from Reason : for arguing Rationally, why may not he who wants it one year, want it ten ? or he that wants it ten, want it all the years that he spends in the flesh ? If any one will contradict us in this, it behoves him to shew us any thing essential to a Christian, which may not in some sort be in the want of Assurance.

Obj. This leads to laziness and idleness ; for if Men may be in the favour of God, and have a Title to Happiness, and not know so much, they will not care though they live and die in ignorance of their condition.

Ans. 1. If such a Doctrine were delivered in another matter no such use would be made of it. If I should say, that Bread and Water were as much as is necessary to keep Life and Soul together, would Men thereupon resolve to take no care, or have any thoughts for any Provision beyond Bread and Water ? why should Christians then, when they hear that the being of
 Godliness

Godliness may be kept up without Assurance, take up there ?

2. 'Tis a Sin to want Assurance : We should as well have Peace in our own Consciences, as Peace with God ; nor are our hearts sprinkled from an evil Conscience, till we have so. I know active desertion, or God's withdrawing of his shining manifestation is not our Sin, even Jesus Christ himself, who though he was made Sin, yet knew no Sin, was deserted, which made him to cry out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?* When he so cried out, we may well conceive, and most sober Divines do conceive, he was under the want of the Influence of actual vision, and of the actual joy and comfort of union ; nor will I deny but that God may withdraw out of Sovereignty, or for the meer trial and exercise of our Graces : but whether ever he did so, is more then I know ; or should he now do so, it would be but for a Season : if for any long time we want Assurance, 'tis through weakness of Faith, or through Spiritual sloth, or some other as Sinful Distemper. He that bids us *work out our Salvation*, and *make our calling and election sure*, would not let us be at uncertainties concerning our selves, did we not slight some Ordinance or omit some Duty, or give way to some Lust.

3. Though one may be a Child of God who doth want this Assurance, yet is there no Child of God who sits down satisfied under the want of it, who doth not desire to attain to the full Assurance of hope ? Uncertainty of our condition

tion is not so light an evil, as that a Christian can carry it, as if it were no burden; nay, but he follows Christ with unutterable sighs and groans; he travelleth from Ordinance to Ordinance, till his Evidences be cleared up, and his Title to the Promises of Pardon be made out. If a Child should have some doubt thrown into his mind concerning his Fathers Love to him, would he be at rest till it were removed? How then can any Believer be himself under prevailing doubts concerning the good will of his Heavenly Father? Hath God promised us his Spirit to seal us up to the day of Redemption; hath he besides his Covenant given us his Sacraments, that we might have the more abundant Consolation; and after all this shall we quietly sit in the dark as if nothing ailed us? how then dwelleth the Love of God in us? Especially those who have sometimes had the light of God's Countenance shining on them, and have after lost it, must needs be restless till they have recovered it. *Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.* Psal. 30. v. 7. Troubled with a Witness, for it was his daily Sorrow of Heart, yea, it was as Death to him; for this he made his Tears day and night, he poured out his Soul in him; and his upbraidings by his Enemies with this, were as a sword in his bones, Psal. 42. 3, 4, 10. As for the Spouse in the *Canticles*, we do find Chap. 5. v. 6. that when her beloved had withdrawn himself and was gone, *her Soul failed when she spake she sought, but she could not find him; she called but he made no answer:* Hereupon she goes to the

Watchmen

Watchmen, to the Daughters of *Jerusalem*, charging them, if they found her Beloved, to tell him, *she was sick of Love*, v. 7, 8. He never duly estimated the friendship of Christ, who can bear his strangeness without great sorrow and heaviness of heart.

In answer to the Third Question, *How, or in what way Assurance is wrought by the Spirit*, I say,

His way of working is very dark and mysterious, and Assurance it self is better felt then expressed; compared therefore, as some conceive, *Rev. 2. 17. to the Manna that is hid, and to the white stone, and the new name written in the stone, which no Man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it.* The Spirit working in our Regeneration is inexpressible; compared therefore, *John 3. to the Wind that bloweth where it listeth, the sound whereof we hear, but know not whence it cometh, nor whether it goeth*: his working in assuring us that we are Regenerate, is much more inexpressible. There are two kinds of Acts in the Soul: 1. *Direct Acts*, such as is that by which the Soul cleaves to Christ, or lays hold on him, or believes in him for Remission of Sins and Salvation. 2. *Reflex Acts*, such as is that by which a Man returns on himself, and doth though not believe, yet know that he believes, believes sincerely: Such Reflex Acts, are the most noble Royal Operations, the most refined Spiritual workings, sufficient, if we had no other Arguments, to prove the Souls Immortality. But such workings of the Soul usually are but weak and transient; *Radius reflexus*

reflexus languet, is the Rule in Opticks; and which leaves us at a greater loss, those places of Scripture from which we should borrow our light in this matter, are so vexed with variety of descants and interpretations, that it is not easie to know what to make of them; it would quite tire out the Patience of an ordinary Reader, if I should but recite the variety of Comments on that place, 1 John 5. 8. *There are three that bear record on earth, the Spirit, the Water, the Blood; and these three agree in one.* That indeed seems to be more plain, Rom. 8. 16. *The Spirit it self beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the Children of God.* But first Grotius will have Συμάρτυρεῖν to be no more then ὑπάρχειν, and he brings for proof a place or two in Scripture, in which it seems to be so used, because it is applyed to the Witness of Conscience; well, having no other foundation to build his conceit on, we may easily rid our hands of him; for the Witness of Conscience is a joint witness, it witnesseth together with God, and is therefore called as some think Συνείδησις. But then granting that Συμάρτυρεῖν doth signifie a joint-witnessing, it will not be so easie to find out what the other Partner is that is joined with God's Spirit in this action; as we translate, it should seem to be *our own Spirit*; But the Rhemists translate, *not with our Spirit, but to our Spirit*, which Translation is put into the Margin of the English Bibles now Read, and was in the Text of those formerly used; and then it will be a question, whether our Spirit be not the joint-witnesser, but only the recipient of this Witness, and the

the joint-witnesser the Son of God, or that voice caused in us by the Spirit of God. Yet because some do therefore want Assurance because they look for it in an undue and unwarrantable manner, expecting some vocal Testimony to tell them, that they are the Children of God. I shall therefore endeavour to unfold the matter as I am able. And this I lay down in the first place.

That look in what way the *Spirit of Bondage* doth work Fear, in the same way the *Spirit of Adoption* doth work Hope and Assurance: now the Spirit bringeth unconverted Persons under fears and troubles concerning their Estate, by convincing them of the demerit of Sin, and shewing them that they are under the Power of Sin, *John. 16. 8. He will convince the World of Sin,* ἐλέγξει· ἐλέγξαν is *errorem præconceptionum profigare*, and ἐλεγχῶ is *συλλογισμός μετ' ἀντιτάσεως τῶ συμπερίστασι*, and that fallacy in which something only seemingly and not really contradictory to the question is proved, is called *ab ignoracione elenchi*. The secure unconsidering Sinner lives in Sin, as if it were a very harmless Innocent thing, he makes a mock of it: The Spirit therefore to awaken him out of his security, and to put him under a necessity of enquiring after a Saviour, doth, joining with his Conscience, bring him under a three-fold Conviction, of *Law, of Fact, of State*, by some such Syllogisms.

Every Liar shall have his Portion in the Lake that burneth with Fire and Brimstone.

I am a Liar.

Therefore,

68 *The Spirits Office towards Believers.*

Therefore, I shall have my Portion in the Lake that burns with Fire and Brimstone.

Or,

He that Believeth not, is Condemned already.
I Believe not.

Therefore, I am Condemned already.

Or,

He that hateth his Brother is a Murderer, and hath not Eternal Life.

I hate my Brother.

Therefore, I am a Murderer, and have not Eternal Life.

These are all of them Conclusions quite contradictory to the vain Principles that did dwell in the secure Sinner; which being set home by the Spirit, must needs make him fear what shall become of him. In like manner doth the Spirit bring *the Heirs of the Promise*, to the Assurance of Hope, by some such Practical Syllogisms as these.

He that loves the Brethren is passed from death to life.

I love the Brethren.

Therefore, I am passed from death to life.

Or,

He that Repents and Believes shall be Saved.

I Repent and Believe.

Therefore, I shall be Saved.

Now the Spirit hath revealed, and inspired Holy Men to leave upon record to us the Propositions in these two Syllogisms; the same Spirit also works in us that Faith by which we are enabled to believe those Scripture Propositions
to

to be Divine infallible Truths; he also worketh in us every gracious habit, and exciteth those gracious acts, which be the evidences and marks of our Conversion, Justification, and Title to Glory; he also helpeth to feel and discover those acts in our selves, and by comparing them with the Rule, to find their sincerity, which is his concurrence with Conscience in making the assumption, and lastly he helpeth Sanctified Reason from the premises to infer the Conclusion; whatever is beyond this is not essential to Assurance, but something separable from it. Sometimes our assent to the premises and conclusion is stronger, sometimes weaker; hence the different degrees of Assurance; sometimes upon this Assurance and Peace of Conscience, we are marvellously enlarged with Consolations, called Joy in the Holy Ghost, sometimes not.

Obj. Some may say, *Is there no other way of working Assurance but this? doth not God sometimes testifie without any such Discourse and Ratiocination? Hath he confined himself to Syllogisms? Doth he not sometimes make some impressions on us by which we are assured that we are the Children of God, without the help or use of any Argumentation?*

Ans. I have been alway apt to think that there is no other ordinary way of assuring the Soul, partly because the Scripture no where encourageth us to look for Assurance in any other way, and partly because to grant an immediate Testimony seemed to me to open such a gap to *Euthusiasme* as it was impossible well to shut;
F and

and I am somewhat imboldned in that sentiment by the concurrent judgment of a sober judicious Divine, Mr. *Tho. Blake*, who in his Treatise of the Covenant thus expresseth himself. “ They
 “ that go about to assert an immediate Testi-
 “ mony in any, will never secure the Soul from
 “ Delusion ; Satan will soon find an artifice to
 “ counterfeit this Testimony, and bear Witness
 “ in the Spirits stead ; and when we think that
 “ we have the Spirit of Truth to assure us, we
 “ shall have the Father of Lies to deceive. But
 in regard many of eminent Piety and Learning
 do assert an immediate Testimony, it may not be
 amiss to enquire a little what they mean by it,
 and how they do bound it, and then to shew what
 may be thought of it. By this immediate Te-
 stimony they tell us, that they do not mean any
 proper whisper or voice, such as young Converts,
 mistaking such Scripture Phrases as *Say unto my
 Soul, thou art my Salvation*, are apt to wait for ;
 but they say it is a perswasion impressed upon a
 Man suddenly, and he knows not how, quieting
 all his doubts and fears, and making him cheer-
 full and comfortable. If you ask them, How a
 Child of God, who is to try all things, dare ad-
 venture to take any such comfort, how he knows
 it not to be a Delusion of Satan ? They tell us,
 that as there is in the eye a certain in-bred light,
 to make it discern light and colours without ;
 a Sound and Air within the Ear, to make it dis-
 cern the Sounds without ; So there is in a Godly
 Man Grace, a New Nature, and habitual instinct
 of Heaven, whereby it discerns the Consolations
 of

of God's Spirit testifying that he is the Son of God, some secret and inexpressible lineaments of the Fathers Countenance in the Child, that the renewed Soul at the very first blush knows, and owns it. Moreover they tell us,

1. That although the Spirit thus testifie without application of any particular word, yet he never testifies contrary to the word, he never speaks but to those who are Regenerate though they do not know themselves to be such.

2. That the Spirit doth not ordinarily thus testifie, but after or in attendance on some Ordinance, or performance of some Duty, or after some very great abasement of a Man's Spirit, and more then ordinary Soul-humiliation, or after some very hard adventure for God, or after some great combat and conflict with Temptation.

3. That such of the Testimonies of the Spirit do beget but an actual Assurance, during the present Exigence, or in order to some present design that God is working thereby.

Now to give my sense of this Opinion.

1. The Authors of it seem so to bound it, as that it would be uncharitableness to think that they have any ill or pernicious design in it.

2. The things which they say are done by Impression, are not without Ratiocination, only the Ratiocination is not so distinct and explicate as when a Man comes to his Assurance by that difficult work of Examination. Philosophers say, that what is done by Beasts through Instinct and Impulse, is not done without something Analogous

gous to Ratiocination ; they commonly give us the examples of such Syllogisms as they suppose to be made by Beasts, as namely Lambs, when they come to their Dams and ~~fly away~~ from the Wolves. So I conceive, that in all the Impressions made on the Soul, whether they be by way of comfort or incitation to duty, there be some Characters either in the matter or manner of them, either in their Holiness, or Greatness, or Vehemence, or Unusualness, by which a Christian knows them to be from God, and so accordingly rests in them, the which Characters did he not find, he would either not regard them, or reject them with abhorrence.

3. I would not have any one lay the stress of his hope of Heaven on any such Impression ; nor upon the account of any such Impression alter his Opinion in reference to any point of Doctrine, or adventure upon any Practice that is in the least questionable unto him. If he should, I take it, he would give the Devil great advantage against him, and subject himself to infinite Delusions, as will soon be manifest to him that will be at the pains to Read over the Discourses of Dr. Casaubon, and Dr. More concerning Enthusiasme. Mr. John Fox, our Holy and Learned Martyrologist, had many Impressions, some of which are taken notice of by his Son in the History of his Life ; but did not they sometimes fail him, and discover themselves to be neither Divine nor True ? Let any one judge by his Comment on the Revelations. He was much troubled about that place, Rev. 13. 5. Where it is said, that the Beast had
power

power to continue forty two months: after much Prayer he had, though not a Voice, yet, an Impression so strong, that a Voice from Heaven could scarce have made him more confident, that he must count these Months by Sabbaths, as Daniels weeks are counted by Sabbaths; he did so by the help of some Merchants, and found the years to be Two hundred ninety four, just the time of the Ten first Persecutions, Doubtless therefore saith he, that was the time of the Beast. But who follows him in this? who almost, though he cannot confirm his own Interpretation, doth not think himself able to overthrow this? 294

4. The most ordinary and safe way of coming to Assurance, is that I before mentioned, The discursive way, in which a Believer from the fruits and effects of Grace infers he hath the habit, and from the habit concludes his Justification and Adoption. This is proved,

1. Because as it is a way least subject to delusion, so is it also most suited to a Rational Creature, whose way of acting is by Discourse and Argumentation: If any Problem be propounded to the Understanding which is not of it self known and evident, the Understanding Naturally falls to finding out some middle term or Argument, by which it may prove that the Predicate doth or doth not agree to the Subject; let any Man whatever try, and he'll find he cannot do otherwise: And how little would be the difference betwixt a Man and a Beast, if a Man should assent to a thing unknown through an instinct

and Impression, and should to one who asks him a reason of his Perswasion be able to return nothing in answer but this, *I am perswaded because I am perswaded.*

2. We must also make Christ to have put himself to a very unnecessary expence, in inspiring holy men to give unto us so many descriptions of Grace, so many Characters, by which the *power of Godliness* may be known from the *form*, if we were not to come to the knowledge of our Grace by making practical Syllogismes before mentioned.

3. Nor should we so often and so earnestly be called on to *try and examine our selves, whether we be in the faith*, if we were not to come to the knowledge of our faith in a discursive way, arguing from the Effect to the Cause: Nor can we give a better Reason, why our *good works* are called *fruits*, then this, Because as the Tree is known by its Fruits, (for *a good tree cannot bring forth bad fruit, nor a bad tree good fruits*) so the Heart by what proceeds from it, is known whether it be good or evil.

4. We find the Saints in Scripture coming to their Assurance this way: *Our rejoycing is this, the Testimony of a good Conscience, that in godly sincerity we have had our Conversation in the World,* 2 Cor. 1. 12. His Joy was founded on the Testimony of his Conscience, but from what did his Conscience testifie? from his sincere Conversation. 2 Tim. 4. 7, 8. *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth is laid up for me a crown of Righteousness.*

ness. How plainly doth he here conclude his Right to the Crown of Life from his having fulfilled the Terms of the Covenant of Grace? Nay, in Scripture we do find that Men are exhorted to do good works, that by them they may ascertain themselves of their Calling, Election, Salvation, 2 *Pet.* 1. 10. *Give diligence to make your Calling and Election sure by good works:* so it is in all the Latine Copies, so in some Greek Copies; not in those that our *English* Translators followed, which is the Reason why they are not in the *English* Bibles, not as the *Rhemists* do slander us, because we do not like them; for as Dr. *Fulke* well replies, the Circumstance of the Place doth of necessity require that Good Works be understood, though they be not expressed in the Text. And the Rich, 1 *Tim.* 6. 17, 18, 19. are exhorted *not to trust in uncertain Riches, but in the living God; to do good, to be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to Communicate;* to what end? that they might *lay up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, and lay hold of Eternal Life.* The least that can hence be inferred is, that good Works are a Foundation of Evidence; or if any one dislike the term *foundation*, and shall choose rather, with *Petit*, to translate, a *Bill of Contract*, a *Bmd*, or *Obligation*, it comes much to the same; for thence it will be easie to infer, That he who is Rich in good works, receives and layes up an Obligation from God, that this Mercy of his shall have it's Recompence of Reward.

5. What need we go further then the experience of Christians? Do not all find that their Assurance is higher or lower, according as they can more or less discern the fruits of Holiness? When they are dead, lumpish, doth not Hope then fail or flag? And if any after back-sliding be as confident of his Estate as ever he was before such back-sliding, do we not think that Mans Faith was Presumption?

Now of this that hath been said concerning the way of attaining Assurance, several good Uses may be made.

1. It confutes those who condemn all use of Signs and Marks, asserting that we are presently to believe that God loves us with a special Love. The late times, among many other sad effects, produced or brought abroad sundry who in their Printed Pamphlets did make it a Sin to doubt, or once to enquire whether we be in Christ; saying, that we do never find that any in the course of Christ's or his Disciples Preaching that did ask the question, Whether they Believed, or whether their Faith were sincere? But what if none did ask that question then, must none ask it now? Are all the various conditions of troubled Souls set down in particular examples in the New Testament? If any one had then doubted of the sincerity of his Graces, could he (unless some one had been present that had the gift of discerning Spirits) have been cured of his doubts any other way then by examining himself by Marks and Signs? But doubtless there were then some who did doubt,
or

or else the Apostle saw they had reason to doubt ; for when he exhorts, 1 Cor. 11. 28. *Let a man examine himself*, and Gal. 6. 4. *Let every man prove his own work*, none can rationally think his meaning was, Let a man take it for granted that his state is good, and force himself into a perswasion that his work is acceptable to God ; he that should so do would neither have *rejoycing in himself alone, nor in another*. But this evil spirit of *Antinomianism* is pretty well (blessed be God) laid, and I will not dispute against it, lest I should raise it again ; only I judge it not unmeet to answer one Objection.

Object. *It may seem, that to take any evidence from our graces, is to receive humane witness to the things of God, which is incongruous.*

Answer. I understand not but we may receive an humane testimony to witness the things of God, though the last resolution of Divine Faith must be into Divine Veracity. But we need not enter into that dispute for the answer of this objection ; for our graces are not wrought in us by our own power, but by the power of God ; and if they were, yet they are only the means by which our condition is known to us ; the efficient cause of this knowledge is the Spirit illustrating our graces, and making them visible, and enabling us to conclude from them.

II. Here's terror to all those wicked persons, who perswade themselves that they are the Children of God, though they have in them none of the marks of the children of God. I know we are apt to be deceived by others, and much
more

more παρολογίζεσθαι to use St. James his word, Jam. 1. 22. to *deceive*, to put a fallacy on our selves. Yet a man would wonder how they who pretend to reason, should be able so to impose on themselves, or where they found the premises from which they infer that conclusion that they are the Children of God : Doth the Scripture any where say, that they who walk not after the Spirit, but after the flesh, shall live ? Or that Drunkards and Swearers shall inherit the Kingdom of God ? If the Scripture say not this, but the clean contrary, how come they then to promise themselves Peace ? Are they still to learn that God is not such a one as themselves, or that they must be judged not according to the Proverbs that pass for current among Men, but according to the Law of liberty ? Sith this Law doth every where condemn them, how is it that their own Consciences do not condemn them also ? Is it not only because they do torture and wrest the Scriptures, and so to bring them down to their own humor and fancies ? But do they not do this to their own destruction ? Must not the great day of necessity shake, bring down this house, which hath no foundation but their own imaginations, exalting themselves against the knowledge of God ? Let all such, if they be not as perfectly void of common sense and reason as they be of Divine Faith, but consider these Statutes, Gal. 6. 7, 8. *Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a Man soweth, that shall he also reap ; for he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption,* 1 Cor. 6. 9, 10. *Knew ye not the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom*

Kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither Fornicators, nor Idolaters, nor Adulterers, nor Effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with Mankind, nor Theives, nor Covetous, nor Drunkards, nor Revilers, nor Extortioners shall inherit the Kingdom of God. Or if they will not hearken to the stiller voice of the Gospel, let them yet hearken to the thunder of the Law, Deut. 29. 18, 19, 20, 21. Lest there should be a Root among you that beareth Gall and Worm-wood, and it came to pass when he beareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have Peace, though I walk after the imagination of my Heart to add Drunkenness to Thirst, the Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that Man, and all the Curses that are written in this Book shall light on him, and the Lord shall blot out his Name from under Heaven, and the Lord shall separate him for evil.

III. Let all that fear God be perswaded to make use of this way of getting Assurance, and not think to get it by I know not what Enthusiastical injections, or by going up and down with complaints against themselves, but look for it in this way of trial and examination. Let not any one say, that the Writing of God is so blurred and blotted that he cannot tell what to make of it, the Waters so mudded that he despairs of ever seeing his face in them; for,

1. If some signs be not visible, others may, and they will suffice to lead thee to the conclusion that thou art in the Bond of the Covenant; if thou canst not take comfort in some Qualifications, yet there

there are others that will afford. If thou canst not find Faith, yet canst thou not deny but thou fearest God, and tremblest at his Word, why these are marks of a child of God, *Isa.* 50. 10. *Isa.* 66. 2. and so is a desire to fear God, *Neb.* 1. 11. only be sure it be an earnest, unwearied, industrious desire.

2. But if any Man be under such sad dark temptations as that he can see no light at all, if he be confusion all over, such a one I advise not to examine; examination at such a time is not a duty, but serves only to breed further fears and uncertainties: In such a case let a man put forth the first act of Faith, cast himself on God, commit himself to him in well doing; he hath a command so to do, therefore he need not fear it will be an act of presumption; he hath a promise if he do so that he shall be safe, let him therefore so do; and in continuance so to do, he shall, if by any way, come to find, that he hath laid hold on the Covenant, and that his condition before, though it was not comfortable, was safe, and known to God, though not to himself.

Quest. 4. What's the reason why the Children of God do want Assurance? Or how comes it to pass that all who have grace do not presently know themselves to have it.

Ans. This is not one Question, but two, and therefore without distinction no one thing can be replied to it. The word *Reason* (all one with cause) may either refer to the meritorious or final cause; either the meaning of the Question is, what are the gracious Intendments and Purposes of God in

in permitting his Children to want Assurance? Or what are the ways by which they do sinfully procure unto themselves the want of Assurance. Of these I will speak distinctly, though, I take it, they are but rarely separated: God doth not usually let his servants be under darkness, but for sin; and he would not permit them to fall into sin, but that he hath an intent to make those very falls, and the punishments he inflicts because of them, subservient to his glory, and their good.

Quest. 1. Therefore enquire we why the Father of Lights suffers the Children of light to walk in darkness? Why he sets the seal and impression of the Spirit so obscurely upon them, that they do not know themselves to be sealed with it to the day of redemption? Especially, seeing he doth hereby lose a very great tribute of Praise and Glory? For how can they praise God for this though incomparable gift, if they know not themselves to have received it? How can they rejoyce in the hope of Glory, if they find not in themselves the Spirit, the only seed and root of this hope.

Ans. This notwithstanding, there are divers good reasons why the Lord, when he hath put grace into our hearts, may yet not publish it in our consciences. For,

1. If we speak not of moderate, but of high Assurance, I think it is a wine too strong for our weak heads, a wine too strong for our vessels to hold long; a glimpse of it is enough to dazle the eye of the understanding; neither our bodies, nor our souls can long hold much of Heavens glory;
consult

consult experience, and you'll find it. *Peter*, and *John*, were upon the Mount of Transfiguration, but they were then besides themselves, they knew not what they said, *Mar.* 9. 6. *Paul*, when he was wrapt up into the third Heavens, saw things that he could not utter; but the sight transported him, whether he were in the body, or out of the body, he could not tell, *2 Cor.* 12. 3, 4. Some Christians, especially of the weaker sex, being all affection, do too much slight a settled calm and peace of soul, as if it were little worth, falling upon such passages, as *Rom.* 15. *Filled with all joy in believing; and rejoicing with joy unspeakable, and full of Glory*, *1 Pet.* 1. 8. They think God hath forsaken them, and that they want faith, when they find not such a sugred joy and delight (as the judicious *Mr. Richard Hooker* fitly calls it, *pag.* 546.) but to such I say, they know not their own strength; should God so feast them continually, they would be less healthy and sound, unfit for the duties of their ordinary particular callings and employments; too much honey (as it follows in the same Author, *Ibid.*) doth turn to gall, and too much joy, even spiritual, would make us wantons; yea, as the full spring-tide is preparatory to a low ebb, so usually these highest passionate joys do make way for, or at least go before, the highest sorrows and fears: Therefore it is well, all things considered, that such cordials are not made our diet, that such suavities are not common.

But if we speak even of *Moderate Assurance*, there be sundry Reasons that may move God to let

let his servants be without that, at least, for a season.

1. *To keep them from Relapses.* Should a Father, after manifold foul miscarriages, upon the first submission of his Son, receive him to Table, and entertain him with Paternal smiles, he would but encourage him to return to his former disorderly conversation ; but by keeping him at a distance, and returning into favour with him by degrees, he makes him more watchful. Semblably, if God, upon our first recovery from the sins into which we have fallen, should presently pardon us, not only in the Court of Heaven, but also in the Court of Conscience ; if he should not only pardon us, but also let us have the assurance of pardon, we might be apt to take up too slight thoughts of sins guilt, and too easily run into the occasions of it ; but by letting us feel the smart and anguish of sin, for Days, Months, Years, he maketh us more watchful, he causeth us to make the straighter paths unto our feet for ever after. *David* being left under the anguish of broken Bones, under the quick and smart sense of his Murder and Adultery, did more ever after dread those sins, then ever did a burnt Child dread the fire : Let no Man say, that it is a low and legal business to keep from sin because of its bitterness ; for though I grant that the love of God be the most perfect motive, yet it is not the most proper and powerful, for those who are flesh as well as spirit : and I verily believe, the most refined Christians, had they not either felt the smart of sin themselves, or conversed with those that had, would

would make too many bold adventures on the patience, forbearance, and long-sufferance of God. *After all this is come on us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespasss, should we again break thy Commandments?* Ezr. 9. 13, 14.

2. *To keep them humble.* For though times of Assurance should be times of Humility, yet few are of so strong a grace as to be able to digest so great an happiness: Pride will not sooner breed in any thing then in those sweet consolations that are shed abroad in our hearts by the Spirit of God, assuring us of our interest in the Promises; that vision of God which is apt in its own nature to make the soul abhor it self in dust and ashes, *Job. 42. 5, 6.* doth, through the corruption in us, but puff it up. When *St. Paul* had been in the third Heavens, enjoying Revelations to an hyperbole, God then thinks meet to buffet him with the Messenger of Sathan: After such extraordinary Vision of God, he was ready to look on himself rather as an Angel, then as flesh and blood: Therefore was there given him a *Thorn in the flesh*. He had either some very violent temptation to some fleshly lust, or some other very piercing tryal; and he tells us twice in on verse, *2 Cor. 12. 7.* That this beset him, *lest he should be exalted above measure.* Also when *Moses* had been in the Mount, and had acquired a lustre by conversing with God, 'tis so ordered, that at the very foot of the Mount he meets with something to humble him, and take him down; *Thy People have made a Golden Calf*: Then which, no words could possibly have

have more cut his heart. Our Saviour who vouchsafed to be tempted like unto us in all things, was then led of the Spirit into the Wilderness to be tempted of the Devil, when he had just heard the voyce, *This is my well-beloved Son in whom I am well pleased*, Matth. 3. 17. 4. 1.

“ Happier a great deal is that Mans case, whose
“ Soul by inward desolation is humbled, then he,
“ whose heart is through abundance of Spiritual
“ delight lifted up, and exalted above measure.
“ Better it is sometimes to go down into the Pit
“ with him, who beholding darkness, and bewailing the loss of inward Joy and Consolation, cryeth from the bottom of the lowest
“ Hell, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* then continually to walk arm in arm
“ with Angels, to sit, as it were, in *Abrahams*
“ Bosom, and to have no thought, no cogitation, but *I thank my God, it is not with me as*
“ *with others*: saith the Learned Hooker, pag. 546.

3. God may hide his face from his Servants, and let them be in dark, *to make them the more earnest in their Prayers and supplications*. As among us, Fathers do hide themselves that their Children may seek after them, and purposely make as if they did not hear, that they may either come nearer them, or cry louder: None more fervent, none more frequent in Prayers, then they who did once live in the light of Gods Countenance, and have lost it: Read but the Psalmes of *David*, Penned by him when he was in any desolation, you'll think that he breathed out his Soul

with his Petitions; such an *ŭſos* is there in his desires, as the Hypocrites Conscience must needs tell him he was never acquainted with; then, if ever, he was able to Water his Couch, and to make his Bed swim with Tears. Like ardent desires we find in the Spouse, *Cant.* 5. upon the withdrawing of her well-beloved. And cannot some of you tell me, how, when you have been in fears about your Condition, you have been all Prayer? have you not even envied your selves the time you were forced to spend in Eating and in Drinking? Have not your hearts been so full, that you have been fain to creep into a corner, and pour out your Souls in Complaints? For my part, I have scarce known any, who for Prayer have been able to keep Company with those who have been at a loss about their Eternal Estate.

4. God may hide. *for the tryal and exercise of his Peoples Graces.* As there would be no use of Candles if there were no night, no use of Cordials if no swooning, so would there be either none at all, or but very little use of some Graces, were it not for hidings and withdrawings of Gods gracious Presence: Faith, Patience, Courage, would not be much put to it, if God should alway smile on those who fear him; nor would their Obedience, in comparison, be praise-worthy: if when God looks more like an Enemy then a Friend, we can then wait and depend on him, then is our Faith Faith indeed, our Love Love indeed. *Rev.* 14. 12. *Here is the Patience of the Saints; here are they that keep the Commandments*

of God, and the faith of Jesus: here Faith and Patience do shew themselves. I reckon there is no surer sign of sincerity, then to have firm resolutions of cleaving to God, and following after him when he seems to have forsaken and cast us off. *I am cast out of thy sight, yet will I look again towards thy holy Temple, (saith Jonah, 2. 4.) Though he kill me yet will I trust in him. I will wait on the Lord that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him, Isa. 8. 17.*

5. God may permit one to want Assurance, that he may the more value it when he hath it. What sticks a little, and comes not till after much seeking, and manifold Prayers, is usually most prized and valued when we have it. Christians will not carelessly lose that which they were fain to give all diligence to attain to; they will not prodigally waste and crumble away their hidden Manna, the fruit of so many sollicitous thoughts and fears; but should it drop into their Mouths upon every gaping, yawning desire, they might then as much despise it as ever did the Israelites of old. Should Assurance come with those weak wishes and velleities that are so frequent in the Mouths of many, we might then set no more by the light of God's Countenance, then we do by Corn, Wine, and Oil: as in Temporals, so in Spirituall, we learn to Estimate our Mercies more by wanting, then by enjoying them.

6. God may let some want comfort, *That they may be the more able to comfort others.* Should their mountain alway stand firm, should God constantly smile on them, and kiss them with the kisses

of his mouth, and make known unto them the most secret Treasures of his goodness, how little Compassion would they shew to over-clouded deserted Souls? They would do by them, as did the Watchmen by the Spouse, smite and wound them, instead of comforting them; they might quench the smoaking flax, break the bruised reed; say, as some have done, that not the Faith of Adherence, but Assurance, doth justifie: I, but being brought in their own apprehensions to the very brinks of Hell, they will deal gently and speak comfortably to those who are in darkness and see no light, and warn them of those Rocks at which they themselves were in danger to suffer Shipwrack, when under the same Tempestuous thoughts; they will patiently hear all their Complaints, and answer all their Objections how weak soever, remembring that they themselves were once sometimes pestered with like scruples. Christ was tempted like unto us in all things, even in point of desertion, for he cried out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* and wherefore was he so tempted, but *that he might be able to succour those that are tempted?* Heb. 2. 18. He was touched with the sense of our infirmities, that he might be a more merciful and faithful high Priest. So good reason had *Luther* to say that Temptation was one of the three things that made a Divine.

7. God permits the want of Assurance, To make his Children the more long after Heaven, where they shall see him face to face, and be perfectly freed from all doubts and fears about God's love to them,

them, and theirs to him. Were our Assurance uninterrupted, and were it such as to put us beyond all possibility of miscarrying, what need we so earnestly to pray that *we might be dissolved and be with Christ*? How little would the difference be betwixt Earth and Heaven? We should walk rather by sight then by Faith. But because our Assurance is at best but imperfect, sometimes none at all, therefore do we groan earnestly that this *earthly tabernacle may be dissolved*, that so we may attain the end of our faith and hope, the salvation of our souls.

8. God may permit some of his Servants to want Assurance *with relation to others*; For if they be good they have hereby an example of Patience and Confidence in God, unto which they may have recourse when God withdraws from them, *Job 17. 8, 9. Upright men shall be astonished at this, and the innocent shall stir up himself against the hypocrite; the righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.* As for the Wicked, they usually take pleasure in their Troubles and Dejections; but when they recover, as mostly they do, then are they filled with horror and confusion, *Amic. 7. 8, 9, 10. Rejoyce not against me, O mine enemy, when I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me. I will bear the Indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his Righteousness. Then she that is mine enemy shall see it; shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where is the Lord thy God.*

9. God may permit his Servants to be without the sense of his Love *with relation to himself*, that his glory may the more appear: His power is more manifested in preserving his Saints without then with Assurance. When *Paul* besought the Lord thrice that the messenger of Satan might depart from him, his suit is not granted, only this answer is returned, *My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is perfected in thy weakness*: whence he resolves, *Most gladly therefore will I glory in my Infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest on me*, 2 Cor. 12. 9. Indeed, so vast a disproportion is there betwixt the joys of Heaven, and the carnal pleasures of this World, that should a Christian alway have Assurance of his Title to the former, it would not be much wondred at if he despised the later: but herein the power of God's Grace is seen, that he brings a Man into the strict despised ways of Holiness, with a resolution, *if he perish, there to perish*; that he keeps him from the Pollutions that are in the World through Lust, even when he doubts whether he shall have a Portion among those that are Sanctified. Herein is seen the Power of the Devil, not that he keepeth Men Captive, whilest he hath Honours and Pleasures to bestow on them; but that he can make them to hold fast their Sins, when God's judgments have laid hold of them in their Sins. God speaketh of such not without some admiration, *Amos 4. 6. I have smitten you thus and thus, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord*. And he sets a brand of infamy on *Abaz*, because he sinned yet more in the day of his distress, 2 Chron.

28. 22. Likewise the Power of God is then most manifest, when he makes any to hold their sincerity in the midst of Temptation and Opposition. Every Christian is the Workmanship of God created in Christ Jesus unto good Works; but in none doth his Eternal Power so evidently appear as in such: God doth even boast of such, *Job 2. 3. The Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou not considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil; and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him to destroy him without cause.* And as his power appears in preserving them in their low condition, so doth his Patience in bearing with all their froward and passionate thoughts and speeches during desertion, and his Mercy and Goodness in bringing them from under it, *Isa. 41. 17. When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their Tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them: I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of vallies, that they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the holy One of Israel hath created it.*

[Corrollary.] Seeing God may have all these Gracious and Holy ends in withdrawing from us the light of his Countenance, and suffering us to walk in the dark; it will not become us to charge God foolishly, or to entertain any hard thoughts of him, as if he had forgotten to be gracious, or as if his truth and faithfulness were ceased for ever:

such thoughts will be rising, for they were the very thoughts of *David*, Psal. 77. but we must chide our selves for them as he did, ver. 10. “*I said, this is my infirmity, but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High.*” As also he doth in another Psalm, 22. after he had complained, ver. 1. *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* he proceeds, *But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.* This is the conclusion we must hold, and not suffer our selves to be beaten from, that God is Holy, Just, and Good; if we hold this fast, we shall do as Christians; and though we see not how at present to reconcile God’s Providences with his Attributes, yet hereafter we shall see he that can wait is blessed, and shall not be ashamed of his Confidence: for he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry.

Second part
of the fourth
question.

The second part of the question is still behind; *What are the meritorious causes that do procure the want of Assurance.*

Ans. The answer to this is wholly to be made up of particular observations and experiences, which are so many and various, that I reckon it next to impossible to put them into order: as for the more common sinful lets and impediments of Assurance, they have been so fully and clearly handled by so many already in print, that if I were not tied up by Promise to say something about them, I might pass them over in silence, or content my self to Paraphrase on some Scriptures in *Job*, the *Psalms*, and *Isaiab*, relating to this head;

head ; but the laws of method calling me to say something to this part of the question also, I shall so do, but yet briefly.

1. *The smallness and littleness of some Mens graces is the cause why they do want Assurance.* The Kingdom of God within them being but as a grain of *Mustardseed*, which is the *least of all Seeds*, 'tis no wonder they see it not; the Root of the matter being but small, and covered over with many Sinful Infirmities, 'tis not strange that they are not sensible of it. I must not so far contradict Experience, as to say that God doth never make the time of Conversion, when Grace is comparatively but small, a time of Sealing ; he did so usually in the first preaching of the Gospel ; for then Men coming out of gross Darkness into marvellous Light, and turning from serving dumb Idols to serve the Living God ; their change must needs be of easier Observation then it is now, when Persons having sucked in Christian Religion with their Mothers Milk, turn onely from a careless, to a more diligent way of serving the true God : And besides, Religion had then nothing to commend it to Mens Affections, but onely its own Beauty and Loveliness ; but now that *Kings and Queens vouchsafe to be unto it nursing fathers, and nursing mothers*, we cannot have so little ground of suspecting our unsincerity as might they, who did no sooner make Confession of Christ, but they became *the filth and off-jeouring of all things*. Yea, even in these days, it pleaseth God sometimes, after great legal humiliations, to let in some hope whilst Grace is but low, lest his Creature should
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be swallowed up of Sorrow : However, usually a little Faith, as to any settled lasting Comfort, is as no Faith, and time with weak Christians is more profitably spent in multiplying those acts which may strengthen the habit, then in enquiring whether it be already sincere : habits cannot of themselves be felt, but they discover themselves by their actions ; and weak habits put forth such faint actions, and with so much interruption, that it cannot easily be known whether they be the fruits of common or special Grace.

Object. But cannot the Spirit of God so irradiate the very least measure of Grace, as to make it visible, and so the ground of Assurance.

Ans. No question, the Spirit can so do ; but we now enquire not what he can do, but what he usually doth ; and this may safely be said, that God's Spirit doth not usually witness to those who have attained to the least measure of saving Grace, and must necessarily by their frequent failings and Transgressions make much work for an accusing Conscience : nor indeed do I see, that it would be for the advantage of less obedient and exact Christians, to have Assurance ; rather it might beget in them Security and Pride, Sins to which Novices are prone.

Object. Is it not said, Gal. 4. 6. *Because ye are sons, God hath sent the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, father ? And if the Spirits emboldning to cry Abba father, be given to Sons because they are Sons, then it may be thought to belong to all Sons, even new born babes, who are as truly Sons as those who are most grown in Grace.*

Ans.

Ans. Some to avoid this difficulty, do not render *on*, *because*, but, *that*; and it may be so rendred, and a very fair sense given of the words; viz. the Spirits being sent into their hearts, crying, *Abba father*, was an evidence that they were Sons; but let it be rendred, as by most it is, *because ye are Sons*, yet it must be granted, that by Sons here, are to be understood, not all who are born again, not all who are no Bastards, but only such Sons as have ceased to be Children, and are no longer *under tutors and governors*, such as have received the Adoption of Sons; such are not those Christians of whom we are now speaking; for though they be delivered from the observation of the Ceremonial Law, yet are they as ignorant and Carnal as those who were in bondage to it.

Object. *Doth not this put the poor newly converted Christian into continual doubts and fears, and strike at the very root of all his hopes and comforts?*

Ans. We are not Creators of Comfort, but only dispensers; we cannot make an easier or speedier way to Assurance then Christ hath made, nor can we approve of, or so much as excuse those who do snatch at comfort before they be meet for it. It is sufficient, that we can assure all, that Christ hath purchased Remission of Sin for them, upon his own terms, the receiving of him as Prophet, Priest, King, and that all who Repent are Justified in the sight of God, though not Justified in their own Consciences; and that in due Season their own Consciences shall justify them also; and that Christ will not *break the bruised reed*, nor *quench the smoking flax*;
and

and that it cannot be that the merciful God should condemn those who tremble at his Word, and lie at his feet, enquiring the Law at his mouth, and grieved at nothing more then that they cannot yield perfect and compleat obedience unto it.

II. Another Reason why so many want Assurance, is because *they seek not for it with so much diligence as a matter of that nature requires.* Some little pains they will take to find out the marks of sincerity, and some little time they will spend in comparing their hearts with those marks, but they will not continue the great duty of self-examination till the matter be brought to some issue; they will not behold their faces in the glass long enough to beget in themselves a true notion or Idea of themselves, but go away and presently forget what manner of persons they were. How few are there whom we can perswade at a night to Catechize their own Souls, to criticize on the actions of the day past? How few that can be prevailed with to spend any considerable proportion of time in Closet-devotions? Yet better may we expect eminent skill in the most abstruse Arts and Sciences without great labour, then expect Assurance without all morally possible sedulity. Wherefore, the *rather give diligence to make your calling and election sure,* 2 Pet. 1. 10. *Give the more diligence,* so the Old Translation. Indeed, the making of calling and election sure doth deserve all diligence, and require all diligence; it is not a little diligence that will serve to find out the manifold subtilties of a deceitful heart, nor a little diligence that will frustrate the devices of Satan,

Satan, who will not fail to joyn himself with carnal reason, and to beget in us hard thoughts of God, *Psal. 63. 1, 2. O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee : My soul thirsteth for thee my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and thirsty Land, where no water is ; To see thy Power and thy Glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.* Like care and desire expressed the Spouse in the *Canticles*, to recover the sight, and to her apprehension, lost love of Christ, *Cant. 3. 1, 2, 3.*

Object. *If this be so, What shall become of those that are poor in the World, who have but little time to spare from the duties of their particular calling, either for the reading of the Word, or communing with their own hearts ? Can none of these have a sense of Gods Love ? Must they perpetually lie under doubts and fears about their eternal state ?*

Ans^r. God forbid I should so say, God hath chosen the poor of this World, rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom, which he hath promised to them that Love him, *Jam. 2. 5.* But there is no good Man so Poor, but he will find out some considerable proportion of time to mind the state of his Soul in : God giveth unto all such a contented mind, which makes them they do not desire much, nor make haste to be rich ; he giveth unto them also wisdom and prudence, by which they can husband their opportunities so as to keep themselves from beggary, and yet give as many visits unto God as they do that have abundance. Besides, what our Lord Christ determined in the case of the Widow, that the two mites she threw into the treasury, was more then the much cast in by the rich, because they
did

did cast in of their abundance, but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living, Mar. 12. 43, 44. holds true here also : the poor Mans hour is more then the rich Mans two hours, because his hour is all that he can tell how to redeem from the necessities of nature and relations, and therefore he shall be so blessed and assisted by God in that hour, that he shall reap as many comfortable fruits of the Spirit, as those who can spare a far greater proportion of time.

III. *Some do want Assurance through the ignorance that is in them, 2 Cor. 13. 5. Examine your selves whether ye be in the faith, prove your own selves ; Know ye not that Christ is in you except ye be assured, void of judgment. 'Tis only for them that are of full age, that by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern betwixt good and evil, Heb. 5. 14.* Therefore the Apostle prayeth, *Phil. 1. 9. That their love might abound more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment, that they might approve things that are excellent, or that they might discern things that differ, as it is in the margin of our present translation, and in the text of the former : Let but any discourse with the generality of troubled Christians, he shall find that many of their doubts had never been, if when they had first given themselves up to God, they had then also given themselves up to some judicious and pious Pastor, that would have been at pains well to instruct them in the Articles of Religion, in the first principles of the Oracles of God : Some mistakes they sucked in when first they began to be serious, which made them ever after to fear where no fear was. Had their*

their eye been single, their whole body had been full of light; but their eye being evil, their whole body was full of darkness, and they could never know whither they went. Three Errors especially I have observed some unskilful in the word of Righteousness to have sucked in, which have occasion'd unto them much perplexity.

1. Error hath been about the terms and condition of the Covenant of Grace: they make more necessary to their acceptation with God, then God ever made; though their hearts be prepared to seek the Lord God of their Fathers, yet because they are not cleansed according to the Purification of the Sanctuary; though their Works are done in Sincerity, yet because they have not been found by them to be full and perfect, therefore have they drawn sad and dreadful conclusions against themselves: Ask them whether they do not believe the Truth of the Gospel, and whether they do not heartily consent that Christ should be theirs, and they his, they dare not deny it; yet will they not be comforted, because they suppose Faith to be quite another thing, a firm perswasion that they are already Justified. Ask them whether it be not their hearty and earnest desire and endeavour to obey the whole Law of Christ, they'll Answer, They hope it is; and yet put away from themselves all the Comforts and Priviledges of the Covenant, because they find in themselves many Sinful Suggestions of the Flesh, or because it is not with them as it is with some others: as if the Condition of the Covenant were perfect and Unsinning Obedience, and not Sincere Obedience;

dience ; or as if all God's Children were of the same Size and Stature. Hence sad Complaints are made by Men, that they do not believe, nor obey Christ, when yet it is manifest they do believe and obey, onely they are mistaken in their Notion about the Nature of Faith and Evangelical Obedience.

2. A Conceit, *That all who are Converted must needs know when they were Converted, and by what means, and how they were Converted ; whereas with some, The Kingdom of God is as if a Man should cast seed into the Ground, and should Sleep, and rise day and night, and the Seed should spring, and grow up he knoweth not how, Mat. 4. 26, 27.* As for knowing the time of Conversion, I am so far from Judging it to be necessary to all Christians, that I think it is in an ordinary way impossible to any Christian : Those indeed whose Lives have been stained with Enormous Crimes, do usually know when they first began to be reclaimed, and what were the thorns with the which their ways first were bedged up ; but how they should know what was the *Ultimum non esse* of the Old Man, and the *Primum esse* of the New Man ; how they should understand the nick of-time in which they ceased to be natural, and began to be spiritual, without some such assistance as is not usual, I conceive not. Yet even in this particular a deluded heart hath turned some aside, so that they cannot deliver themselves, and say, *Is there not a Lie in my right hand ?* Men could not be held long in such a snare as this, if they did not pin their Judgments on the sleeves of some well meaning Teachers, all whose dictates they swallow without consideration. 3. Some

3. Some are hugely tormented *because they mistake themselves about the way of working Assurance, and about the nature of Assurance*: They have thought that Assurance is wrought by some vocal, or as it were vocal Testimony of the Spirit, which is not ordinarily the way of working Assurance; and they think, that so soon as they be assured they must needs be void of all fears, and filled with all joy in Believing: hence, when they have Assurance, yet they complain they want it; but this is a Mistake, for glorious and ravishing Joy is a separable accident from Assurance; nor yet doth Assurance exclude all doubting and fear, but onely such doubting and fear as ariseth from Infidelity and reigning Hypocrisie.

IV. Some are kept from Assurance, *because they do keep the Devils counsel, and bury those doubts and fears about their condition in their own bosoms*, which they ought to discover unto others. This is mostly the condition of others who are pestered with the *horibilia de Deo*, buffeted with Blasphemous thoughts, or with Temptations to uncleanness, these dishonourable loathsome workings of Soul they are unwilling to make known: hence *they are like unto the troubled Sea that cannot rest, but is continually casting up its mire and dirt*. If Women, when in their Pangs, should not send for the Midwife to deliver them, How few would not miscarry? If Students should never have recourse unto their Tutors to solve their Doubts, How little would be their Proficiency? And must not they, who will not make use of the help and assistance of their Spiritual Guides and
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Teachers, go much about, and stay longer under bondage, and in the place of bringing forth of Children then they needed else to do? There are some, to whom God hath given the Tongue of the Learned, that they may speak a word in due season to him that is weary, Isa. 50. 4. Some whom God hath comforted, to the end they may comfort others with the same consolations wherewith they themselves have been comforted, 2 Cor. 1. 4. Some to whom it is said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins ye remit, they are remitted, and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained, John 20. vers. 23, 24. These God will have owned and honoured, not by Confessing to them all the sins of our Lives, but by opening to them such doubts as God seems to deny us satisfaction to upon our own private Prayers and Endeavours; for not doing this, many are kept a great while on the rack, that else might soon find ease and relief. The Spouse in the *Canticles*, Chap. 3. Vers. 3, 4. after she had enquired of the Watchmen, Whether they had seen him whom she loved, had not passed far but she found him. But then Persons must make Conscience of dealing plainly and truly with those who do watch over their Souls: which I do therefore suggest, because it is too usual with those that are troubled, not faithfully to relate where the Shoe pincheth them, but with the Lapwing to make the greatest noise when they are furthest off from the nest. *Moses* was troubled that God should think of sending him into *Egypt*, and he would needs make as if his Stammering Uncloquent Tongue were the cause

cause of his Loathness to go about that Message, *Exod. 4. 10.* But, the truth was, *Moses* had killed an *Egyptian*, and he was afraid lest if he should go back into *Egypt*, there might be there who would require Blood for Blood; and therefore when God had satisfied him, *That all the Men were dead who sought his Life*, *Verf. 19.* he takes his Wife and Children, and without more ado sets himself to return to the Land of *Egypt*.

V. Some do keep themselves under Doubts and Fears, by *joyning themselves to unmeet Company*. There are that be Carnal and Sensual, the Discourse of such must needs be to such as are in Trouble, but as the continual dropping of Rain on smoaking Flax. 2. There be some godly Ministers, who have so accustomed themselves to breathe out Thunder and Lightning, that if they should be resorted to, they would with the Watchmen in the *Canticles* wound the Love-sick Spouse, whom they ought to pity and comfort. 3. There be also who Daub with Untempered Morter; who, in order to comfort, deliver Sayings worthy of all manner of Acceptation, but not faithful and true: How profitable are sound words? But what do the Arguings of such Men avail? They will not do so much good while they are supposed to have a foundation in Scripture, as they must needs do mischief when they are upon Examination found to be built on the Sands. 4. There be also who do love in all Places and Companies to be speaking of their enjoyments, to be telling what great things they

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have

have done for God, and God for them ; of such I could scarce ever bring my self to have any charitable opinion ; for tho' a good Man may sometimes lawfully glory, yet will he never do so, but when he is by unavoidable necessity put upon it so to do, 2 Cor. 12. 1, 11. But I list not now to dispute the lawfulness or unlawfulness of commending a Man's self ; expedient doubtless it is, not to glory before those who have the Arrows of the Almighty sticking in them ; rather we should speak to such of the Infirmities we have felt, or do feel, lest we should discourage them. 5. But that company which troubled clouded Souls do most affect, (and yet which is as dangerous unto them as any) is the company of such as are as much dejected as themselves ; but as a Drunkard did never grow sober by conversing with Drunkards, nor ignorant persons ever grow more knowing by communion with those who were no wiser then themselves, so nor can a desponding Christian grow more comfortable, by joyning himself to such as are equally cast down with himself ; nay, by such means troubles are insensibly increased, fears multiplied, and hard thoughts begotten of God who is Grace and Love. Converse, in such cases, should be with those whose Consciences do make them a continual Feast, who are sober and judicious, and will handle a Broken or Dis-joynted Bone with the Spirit of Meekness, Gal. 5. 1. who being not ignorant of Satan's Devices, will see that they be not overwhelmed with Sorrow, 2 Cor. 2. 7. 11.

VI. *A perverse, disputing, quarrelling, cavilling humor, hinders many from Assurance.* The Breasts of Con-

Consolation do then satisfie when we put them to our Mouths and suck at them; the Word of Promise doth profit us when it is mixed with Faith. If instead of receiving of it Believingly, and meditating on it delightfully, we put it away from us as not belonging to us, no support shall we receive from it. Whilst the Unregenerate condition continueth, the Devil will assist Men what he can to thrust by, and put off any thing that might beget in them the least distrust of themselves; but when they are once begotten again by the Resurrection from the Dead, he will bestir himself as much as may be to make them pause upon onely that which is apt to cause fear and bondage, and not once to mind any thing that hath the least tendency to comfort and quiet them. Thus was it with *David*, Psal. 77. 2. *My sore runs in the night season, my soul refused to be comforted.* Never had Moderator in the Schools more ado to stop the Mouth of a wrangling Sophister, then Ministers usually have to silence the Reasonings of some People against themselves; they seem to have searched the Devils whole Armory, to find out Weapons to fight against their own Peace; not one place of Scripture sounding terrour, but they have it in a readiness; not any one harsh expression ever dropped from the Pen or Lip of any eminent Divine in order to the awakening of sleepy sinners, but they have it at their fingers end, and will urge and plead it to the full. "Read the Speeches of troubled Souls Recorded in Scripture, especially *Job* and the *Psalms*, you will easily observe there is

‘ something more then ordinary Rhetorick in
‘ them ; and he that shall deal with any such now,
‘ shall also find it so ; yea, he shall find them in
‘ some matters, to reason above and beyond their
‘ natural parts, so as one can scarcely need any
‘ other argument to confirm him that there is a
‘ Devil, who hath but heard and impartially con-
‘ sidered of their arguings. He that writes the
‘ Life of *Francis Spira* tells us, with what subtilty
‘ and wonderful sophistry he discoursed against
‘ the pardonableness of his sins, and possibility of
‘ his salvation. *Spira*’s case may be thought to
‘ have something peculiar in it, but I have ob-
‘ served a like sagacity in some of ordinary parts,
‘ whom none not void of Charity would not have
‘ thought to be good Men : The which as I can in
‘ part ascribe to that distemper of body which
‘ doth accompany soul-trouble, so I think he that
‘ should ascribe it to that only, and not at all to
‘ the evil spirit, (who loves to fish in troubled
‘ waters, and to joyn himself as an assisting form
‘ to him that sets himself to War against himself,)
‘ would rather shew himself an Infidel, then a
‘ Philosopher. Nay, it is not unusual with them
‘ to libel and bear false witness against them-
‘ selves, to lay such things to their own charge
‘ as they were never guilty of, on purpose to
‘ hinder those who have to deal with them
‘ from giving them any comfort, on purpose to
‘ make them alter the frame of their discourse :
‘ Can it be wondred that such as these go mourn-
‘ ing and hanging down their heads all their days ?
‘ If they will needs shut up all doors of hope that
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are opened to them, can it seem marvellous, that they are troubled, and suffered to despair everlastingly?

VII. Many are kept from Assurance through groundless irrational scruples, causing them to forbear the use of Ordinances, and other sanctified means in which Assurance is usually wrought. Would a sick Man ever recover health that should be afraid of Physick? Or a weak Man ever recover strength that should abstain from the good wholesom food that is appointed to beget Blood and Spirits? Why, no more will they ever meet with God, or enjoy the sense of his love, who come not near the place where his honour dwelleth; they must needs be in the dark, who will not open their eyes to behold the Sun of Righteousness; needs be in a perpetual thirst, who will not draw water out of the wells of salvation to quench their thirst. Yet how many are afraid to come to the fire, because they are cold, and to put on their cloths because they are naked, or to come to the Physician because they are so extreemly sick. Tell them they must pray; they'll answer, no, because being wicked, their prayers must needs be an abomination to the Lord; invite them to the Sacrament of the Lords Supper, they'll tell you, that finding not themselves to be in Christ, they should but eat and drink judgment to themselves: Put them upon hearing the Word Preached, then they have something to object against either the call, or the life of the Minister. Such scruples as these are the Thieves that do waite the Candle of the Lord, the Worms that eat up the

hidden Manna, the Veils that hide the *new Name* from our eyes. A Conscience truly tender is the fittest subject to receive the seal of the Spirit, but a scrupulous Conscience is a very Hell upon Earth; for it either quite takes a Man from the direct immediate Acts of Gods Worship and Service, or else it confines him only to such, keeping him from the duties of his particular calling. It is hard to say which extream is more dangerous; the one starving, the other surfeiting the Soul.

Obj. *But can any one give God too much time, or be too Religious and careful about his Soul?*

A. Surely no; he cannot have too much of our time, unto whom all our time is due; nor can any one have too much of that which is his happiness, or be too careful about that, which if he should lose, nothing can be given in exchange for; but yet it is possible for us to bestow too much time on some one part of obedience; and we do so, as oft as we suffer it to juggle out all, or any of the rest. The works of our Callings are the service of God, when done in obedience to his Command, and with an eye to his Glory; and for them, when so done, we may from the Lord expect to receive a reward: And therefore when the Devil *transforming himself into an Angel of Light* suggests, What wilt thou eat or drink, card or spin, study any humane Author, when thou knowest not but thou maist be in Hell the next moment? He must be Answered, That obeying God sets no one nearer Hell: And that though Praying be in it self better then any either natu-
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ral or civil action, yet he that commanded it, commanded them also, and therefore they also are in their season to be done. The Devil hath that Soul at advantage enough, whom he can perswade either not to pray, or to do nothing but pray.

VIII. *The greatest and most common cause of the want of Assurance, is some unmortified lust, some secret bosom corruption unto which Men give entertainment, or at least which they do not so vigorously oppose, and heartily renounce as they might; this is that which casts them on sore straights and difficulties; how should it be otherwise, seeing God being infinitely wise and holy, either cannot, or will not reveal his secrets to those, who harbour his known enemies in their bosom; either cannot or will not regard the whinings and complainings of those who dally with that very sin which galls their Consciences, and connive at the stirrings of that very lust for which he hides his face from them? Doth any one come to his Minister, or to his Christian friends, and say, Is it peace? They must all Answer, What Peace, so long as thou livest in Commission of any known sin, or Omission of any known Duty? All doubts and fears are begotten upon sin, either real or imaginary; if the sin be but imaginary, a rectified judgment may scatter the doubts and fears as the Sun doth mists; if the sin be real, no curing the doubts thence arising, but by an unfeigned repentance. If I would produce all the Scriptures that prove this, I must transcribe the one half of the Bible. But it would*
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be needless so to do, seeing it seemeth to have been a notion engraven even on natural Conscience, That sin so defiles persons, that till they be washed from it neither, they nor their services can be accepted; from whence arose the custom of setting Water-Pots at their entrance into their Temples or Places of Worship; and those phrases, *Eo lavatum ut sacrificem*, and *Num lavabis ut rem divinam facias*?

Quest. 5. *What are the Motives or Arguments by which we may quicken our selves to look after this sealing work of the holy Spirit of God?*

Ans. Is there any need of Arguments to excite us to this Duty? Doth not the New Creature naturally pant after Assurance as the Heart panteth after the Rivers of Water? Yea, may not the rational Soul seem to desire it? Do not all wicked Men catch after certainty, and frame unto themselves some kind of certainty? In this only miserable, that they either build on a false principle, or on a true principle faulty applied. To doubt of happiness is an heavy burthen, but to fear extremest misery, that is intolerable; and yet thus must every one do till he have either Assurance, or those probable hopes that are next of kin to assurance. Shall worldlings do so much to secure their Lands, Goods, Estates, shall they require Bonds, Seals, Oaths, Sureties, and yet think all too little, and shall we count any thing too much to assure unto our selves the eternal condition of our poor Souls? In the fear of the Lord let it be considered.

I. 'Tis only the assured Christian that can either desire, or so much as adventure in cool blood to die ; all others must needs all their life time be in continual bondage through fear of Death. Tell not me, that some wicked ruffling Gallants, who neither have Assurance, nor are in any near capacity to receive it, are yet very prodigal of their lives ; for I am speaking of Men, and not of Brutes : of those who are guided by Reason, and not by Sense ; of those who are convinced that their Souls are immortal, and that it is their greatest folly and misery to lose them, not of those who have banished all thoughts of another world, and look not on Death as an inlet to Eternity ; the instance of these Monsters therefore notwithstanding, I say only the (in some degree) assured Christian can chearfully look the Prince of Terrors in the face, only he can triumph over this last Enemy : Not only the sinners in Sion are afraid, fearfulness doth not only surprize the Hypocrite, but also the sincere Christian, in so far as he doth not know himself to be such. With what shiverings must they needs enter into the *Chambers of darkness*, who do not know but that they may lead them into *outer darkness* ? How unwillingly must the Soul needs leave its old Companion the Body, whilest it is uncertain whether it shall stand or fall when it comes to give an account of all it hath done in the Body. But now he that is come to a certainty about his estate, he can not only not be afraid of death, but also desire it, and sweetly please himself in the Fore-thoughts of it, yea, though it be not a natural but a violent

lent death. Read the Book of Martyrs, and you will think that our Witnesses to the Truth did even Complement with their Torments, and lie down in the devouring Flames as merrily as if they had been Beds of Down. Or Read the Scriptures, and you will find St. Paul, 2 Tim. 4. 6, 7, 8. exulting in the thoughts of his approaching violent dissolution; *I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand: I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the Faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness which the Lord the Righteous Judge shall give to me, and not to me only, but unto all that love his appearing.* At another time indeed we find him in a strait, not knowing what to desire, whether to abide in the flesh, or to be dissolved, Phil. 1. 23. but whence did this dispute arise? not because Death would not be to him more desirable and welcome and gainfull; but because his abiding in the Flesh would be more profitable and serviceable to the Church. When he looked no further then himself, then *he groaned being burdened, desiring to be clothed upon with his house from Heaven; knowing that if the earthly house of his Tabernacle were dissolved, he had a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens,* 2 Cor. 5. 1.

II. *Only the assured Christian can despise the World, and joyfully endure the loss of his Goods.* He only that knows himself to be clothed with the Sun, can trample the Moon under his feet; He only on whom God hath lift up the light of his Countenance takes no care for Corn and Wine, hath

no anxious thoughts what he shall Eat, what he shall Drink, or wherewithal he shall be Cloathed. True indeed, such is the vanity of all things here below, such the Transcendent Excellencies of the Glory of the other World, that if a Man had but a possibility of attaining these, he were mad if he did not readily forsake those; and doubtless, the Soul when it heareth of the Jewel of great Price, doth adventure all to buy it, before it hath any certainty that it shall ever actually have and enjoy it: I, but yet seeing we do naturally prefer one Bird in the hand before twenty in the bush; seeing sublunary things have the advantage, though not of splendor and magnitude, yet of Naturalness and nearness of Operation: we should be in great danger to take up our Portion in this world, did not *Faith give substance to the things hoped for, and evidence to the things not seen*, did not also the Spirit Seal up unto us our Interest in, and Title to the things hoped for and unseen. Those who have Faith, and know not themselves to have it, do make a shift to crucifie the Flesh with its Lusts, and to overcome the World; but it is somewhat an hard shift; much ado they have to keep themselves from envying the Prosperity of the Wicked; ready they are ever and anon to cry out, *In vain have we washed our hands in Innocence, and walked mournfully all the day long*; ready to have questionings and disputings, whether they had not done as wisely to have trucked with the World for such an happiness as it can afford: But Faith in its vigour, Faith seen and felt, easily keeps under all such Carnal Arguings, and so satisfies a Man in
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the choice that he hath made, as that he is jealous and suspicious lest the World should gain too much on his Heart, and in the abundance of all things *Rejoyceth as if he Rejoyced not*, and in the loss of all things *weepeth as if he wept not*; the assured Christian after he hath bought, is *as if he possessed not*, 1 Cor. 7. 30. and when he hath nothing, *as if he possessed all things*, 2 Cor. 6. 10. Heb. 10. 34. *Ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in your selves that ye have in Heaven a better and enduring substance.* He doth not say, they know barely that there was in Heaven a better and enduring substance, but that they themselves had in Heaven a better and more enduring substance, that that Eternal Inheritance was reserved for them, and that Christ had entred upon it as *their fore-runner*; a word which it had been Presumption for us to use, if the Scripture had not used it, Heb. 6. 20. and if our Saviour himself had not told his Disciples that he went afore-hand to *prepare a place for them*, Joh. 14. 2. But how did the Hebrews know that they had this better and enduring Substance? They knew it within themselves: that is, to find that they had a Title to the more enduring Substance, they needed not to look any further then themselves, 1 Joh. 5. 10. *He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the Witness in himself*; the Witness of what? of *Eternal Life which is in the Son*, vers. 11. *He that beareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, Hath Everlasting Life*, Joh. 5. 24. and Joh. 6. 54. *Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath Eternal Life.* The first-fruits of the Spi-
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rit do assure him of the whole Crop. Hath the Spirit made known to me such things as flesh and blood cannot reveal, and is the belief of these things so rooted in my heart as that I do make them my Portion and my Treasure, as that I do heartily pursue after them, even to the renouncing of carnal Pleasures? Then sure there is in Heaven an Inheritance Incorruptible reserved for me. Every Man that is Christs hath the Spirit in him, and this Spirit is *the earnest*, thrice is he so called, 2 Cor. 1. 22. 2 Cor. 5. 5. Ephes. 1. 13. the Greek word used in all those three places, and no where else in all the New Testament, is (as all acknowledge) of an *Hebrew* Extraction, and with the *Hebrews* is a Word of Promise and Engagement in Bargains, but yet is well Translated in the fore-mentioned Places *earnest*, though by the *Rhemists* constantly *pledge*, for it doth among the *Greek* Fathers so signifie, and the Spirit is a part of that Reward which is promised; he that hath this Spirit may *ἀνὸ τέρε καὶ αὐτὸ τοῦ πνεύματος δαπάνην*, in St. Chrysostome's Phrase. No wonder that he who hath this earnest of the true Riches can part with the unrighteous Mammon; no wonder that he who is secured of what is his own, can lose that which is another Mans, especially if called to part with it for the sake of Christ, who with his own Blood purchased the Everlasting Inheritance for him.

III. *Assurance will marvellously strengthen against the Censures and Reproaches of Wicked Men.* For why should he count it any great matter to be judged of Men, who knows that God hath justified him? What need it disquiet him that the
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World accounts him an Hypocrite, who hath God's Testimony that he is sincere? What need he be cast down that some do brand him for a Faction fellow, so long as he sees himself by the Spirit sealed for a Son of Peace? Or others call him a *Tobias* and *Sanballat*, so long as he is assured that he opposeth none but such as are building *Babel* and not *Sion*? 'Tis because our Conscience gives but a dark Testimony, that we are so disquieted with the Railings of those whose Tongues are set on fire from Heil: Were we but once sure that we are not the Men we are represented to be, we might then glory in our Reproaches, and esteem them great Riches, knowing that they shall work together for good, and that they are the Badges of our Sonship, and that there is a time coming when our Righteousness shall shine out as the Light, and the Mouth of every Adversary be stopped, 1 Pet. 1. 14. *If ye be reproached for the Name of Christ, happy are ye, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth on you.* We may Rejoyce in as much as we are made Partakers of Christ's Sufferings, and conclude therefrom, that when his Glory shall be revealed, we shall be glad also with exceeding joy. *If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorifie God on this behalf,* verj. 16. He that hath the Testimony of a good Conscience, not only that he is a Christian, but also that he suffers as a Christian, he may glory that he is accounted worthy to suffer Reproach. But when a Man hath never so clear Testimony that he is a Christian, if he should suffer not as a Christian, but as an evil doer, or as a base-body in
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other mens matters, if he should then Rejoyce, he would but glory in his shame.

IV. *Assurance will beget holy boldness in Prayer*; 'tis therefore made one, and indeed the chief effect of the Spirit of Adoption, to teach us to cry *Abba Father*, Rom. 8. 15. to send us to God with as much confidence or more then we go to our Fathers according to the Flesh; to make us rest satisfied, that what we ask according to the Will of God, we shall have it in due Season as surely as if we had it already. If we are once assured that an Act of Indemnity and Oblivion is passed, and that God is as much our Friend as if there had been no variance betwixt us, we may then sure come with boldness to the Throne of Grace, Heb. 4. 16. *μετὰ παρρησίας*, with a liberty to say what we list, provided the matter we Pray for be grounded on Divine Precept and Promise; provided also, we remember that we have to do with him who abhorreth the sacrifice of fools, and unto whom our words should be but few, full of Weight and Affection, void of all heartless Tautologies and vain Repetitions: Whereas when Assurance is wanting, a Man is ready to faint, very Pusillanimous, afraid to look up to God, under doubts and fears whether ever any thing will come of the Requests he maketh, whether God would not be as well pleased if he should hold his Peace as if he spake. There is as much difference betwixt a Christian with and without Assurance, as betwixt a Tree in Summer and Winter, as betwixt Sampson when his Locks were on, and when they were cut off; he indeed thought when he had lost his

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Hair to have done as formerly, but he soon found by the prevailing of the *Philistines* that he could not : so he that hath lost the Witness of the Spirit, may think to rub up his Graces, and Pray with as much Life and boldness as formerly he did, but he shall find himself mistaken. *Whatever weakneth Evidence, weakneth Prayer also.* Prevailing of Lust darkneth our Evidences, it also deadneth us in Praying, *Psal. 40. 12. Innumerable evils have compassed me about, mine Iniquities have taken hold of me so that I cannot look up, they are more then the hairs of my head, wherefore my heart faileth me.* His heart that should have furnished him with matter and Affection failed him, nor durst his Eyes look up to the Place where God's Honour did dwell. In another *Psalm* he tells us his mouth was shut ; *Mine Iniquity is ever before me, I am so troubled that I cannot speak.* Words which at other times he had at his command were now wanting, and he stood as it were a mute. O let all who complain of straitness and deadness and dauntedness, remember what it is that must quicken, embolden and enlarge them, *viz.* the Witnessing, Sealing Act of the Spirit ; that once obtained, a Suppliant goes on as doth a Ship with full sail where there is Sea-room enough.

V. *Assurance will sweeten the Reading of the Word, and the Receiving of the Sacraments :* For with what delight must he needs Read over all the Promises of the Covenant, who hath the Spirit assuring him that they are all his ? With what comfort must he needs behold the Body
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and Blood of Christ, and meditate on the benefits thence flowing, who is perswaded that he hath an undoubted Interest in them, and that his sitting at the Sacramental Table is but a Pledge of his sitting with Christ in the Kingdom of his Father? And that when he Eats the Bread and Drinks the Wine, he doth but Touch and Taste of that with the fuller Meals whereof he must be satisfied to all Eternity? Yea, the Laws and Commandments which formerly seemed burthensome, will, Assurance once gained, be accounted not grievous, but easie and delightful; because a Man then feels that *love* in his heart *which is the fulfilling of them*; yea, the very Threatnings and Curses of the Law, which before Assurance cannot but make the heart exceedingly to quake and tremble, Assurance once obtained, are Read and Meditated on with the greatest Pleasure, because a Man knows himself through Faith in Christ to be delivered from them. It is a kind of Hell on Earth, when a Man goes up and down fearing lest every place of Scripture he meets with should kill him; but it is a very Heaven on Earth, when a Man can look on all things contained in Scripture as his own: when he can say, *Whether it be the World, or Life, or Death, or things present, or things to come, all are mine, and I am Christs, and Christ is Gods.* To such a one, if to any other, the Statutes of the Lord are right, *rejoycing the heart, more to be desired then Gold, yea, then much fine Gold, sweeter also then the honey, and the honey-comb.*

VI. *Assurance will wonderfully heighten and enlarge us in Praise and Thanksgivings.* If the Spirit do dwell in us, yet unless we have the sense and feeling of him, scarcely will our hearts be filled with joy, or our mouths with Praise. Why I pray you do the Angels and Spirits of Just Men, made perfect, spend Eternity in *Hallelujahs*, but because they do walk by sight, are continually beholding God, and in the Possession of Glory; sure also not to fall from it? An assured Christian cannot make such sweet and uninterrupted Melody, because, alas, his Assurance is not perfect, but mixed with many Doubts and Fears; but yet, whilst he is under the actual sense and enjoyment of God's Love, he cannot but break out into his Psalms, Hymnes, and Spiritual Songs. Hear how *David* rouseth up all his Faculties to joyn and bear a part in Spiritual Praises, *Psal. 103. 1, 2, 3. &c.* *Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me bless his Holy Name: Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and forget not all his Benefits; who forgiveth all thine Iniquities, who healeth all thy Diseases, who Redeemeth thy Life from Destruction, who Crowneeth thee with Loping Kindness and Tender Mercies, who satisfieth thy Mouth with Good Things, so that thy Youth is Renewed like the Eagles.* Nay, Assurance will not let a Man be alone in this Musick, it will make him invite and call upon others to bear a Part; If *Dauids* Cup do overflow, he calls on others to come and taste it; *O taste and see that the Lord is gracious: come and I will tell you what wonderful things he hath done for my soul. O Praise the Lord for his Mercy endureth for ever.*

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And again, and again, *Praise the Lord, for his mercy endureth for ever.* As good-fellows, when they are well heated with Wine and strong Drink, begin to one another in their filthy Songs and Ballads; so Christians, *being filled with the Spirit, do speak to one another in Hymnes, Psalmes, and Spiritual Songs, singing and making melody to God in their hearts,* Ephel. 5. 18, 19.

VII. *Affurance will further Repentance in both its parts and acts.*

1. For *Sorrow*; Nothing sooner melts the Heart then a Beam from the Son of Righteousness; nothing sooner sends a Man out with *Peter* to weep bitterly, then a Love-look from Christ his Lord; one smile of his Countenance on a sinful Soul not hardned, not asleep, is enough to make it weep Rivers of Tears because it hath Transgressed his Laws. There is a Repenting Sorrow for, or in order to, the obtaining *the pardon of sin*; and this is not (say the Antinomian what he will to the contrary) unbeseeming a Saint; nay, it is that which he is in hundred Places of Scriptures called to: but there is also a Repenting Sorrow arising from *Pardon*, a striking on the Thigh because we have quenched the motions of so good a Spirit, and abused that Riches of Grace so clearly manifested, Ezek. 16. 63. *That thou must remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done.* This may seem an harsh Paradox, and Phantastick Dream to some, but they are such as are not partakers of the Divine Nature, which is Ingenuous, and Afflicted

with nothing more then the Remembrance of Unkindness and Unthankfulness.

2. It also furthurs us in the forsaking and renouncing of sin. They that are tied with this Cord of Love will not easily break it: 'tis made you know the great Aggravation of Solomons Idolatry, *That he turned from the God of Israel, that had appeared to him twice,* 1 King. 11. 9. That manifestly implyeth, that the manifestation of God's Love is not a spur to Licentiousness, but a Bridle to keep from it. Indeed they who know their Garments to be made white in the Blood of the Lamb, will not easily suffer them to be again defiled with the Pollutions that are in the World through Lust: Corrupt Nature will be taking occasion, as from the Law, so from the Gospel also to Sin, it will be suggesting *sin that Grace may abound*; but Renewed Nature will be throwing back such Suggestions with abhorrence, Rom. 6. 1, 2. *What shall we say then? shall we continue in sin that Grace may abound? God forbid: how shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?* How can we that know that our old Man is Crucified together with Christ that the Body of Sin may be destroyed, serve Sin any longer? how shall we that be Married to him who is raised from the dead, bring forth fruit to our former Dead Husband? We do love our Sins Naturally, as we love either Right Eye, or Right Hand; Will any thing but the sense of a greater Love, make us to cut them off, or to pull them out? Nothing more constrains to the hatred of Sin, then the Love of Christ; nothing makes us
more

more to love him, then a sense that he loveth, us, and that with an Everlasting Love.

VIII. *Assurance* doth marvellously deaden the heart to all needless disputes and controversies, and settle the heart in the Truth, and fortifie it against the subtilties of Seducing Spirits. They that can Read the Law written on their hearts, do not dote on questions and strife of words, but avoid Profane Babblings, and oppositions of Sciences falsely so called; and if any will needs shew their Wits and Skill in disputing against any Duty or Act of Obedience, they have that within them which will not suffer them to hearken to him; they care not to answer him any other way then *Diogenes* confuted *Zeno's* Fallacy against Local Motion, by walking up and down the Room. Had Men but felt the Power of those Truths on their Hearts which are commonly Discoursed and Preached, they would not so easily have changed their Minds about them as some in the late Times were observed to do; had but their Hearts been Established with Grace they could not so easily have been carried about with divers strange Doctrines; there's no such Preservative against Apostacy and Heresie, as Assurance. *No man that bath drank old wine, will presently desire new, for he will say that the old is better.* He that hath but heard of Old Wine, and taken his Opinion of its Vertue upon trust from the Reports of others, may be induced to Drink New Wine; but so will not he who hath tasted of it, and felt it making glad his heart, and strengthening him against his many Infirmities. Let the Sophister first go and perswade the weary Traveller, that the Appetites

of Hunger and Thirst are but fancies, or to throw away the Bread and Water appointed by God for the satisfying of those natural appetites; then may he hope to perswade the experienced Christian, that all his desires after Christ are but the workings of a Melancholy Phantasie, or to despise the Body and Blood of Christ, the onely Things that ever he found to satisfy those desires.

Object. What then, Can the Assured Christian Answer every Question that a Subtil Disputant makes? Can he solve every Fallacious Argument of a Cunning Sophister?

A. No: perhaps he cannot answer any one of his fallacies; but he hath such a sense of the reality and preciousness of the things against which the fallacies are framed, that he knows them to be but fallacies, and cares not much, were it not for others sake, whether they be ever answered or no. If a Condemned Malefactor, dead in Law, should have his Princes Pardon brought him, and had accepted it, and upon acceptation of it found himself restored to Life again, and every thing that made his Life comfortable unto him, how little would he matter it whether he were pardoned by an Immanent or Transient Action, or whether he did receive his Pardon by an act of the Understanding, or of the Will, by one act, or by many, or whether the acceptation of his Pardon were the instrument, or the condition of his Pardon? As little will he who hath a sense of his Faith, and of his Justification by Faith matter it how those Controversies are decided, that have of late years occupied the Pens and Tongues of so many both

Learned

Learned and Unlearned : As little doth he matter it, I say, as to himself, though for the sake of others he rejoiceth to see truth accurately handled, and rescued from those absurdities wherewith adversaries, taking advantage from the less cautious expressions of her friends, had loaded her.

What sayest thou now, O Christian? Is this assurance worth thy seeking after, and praying for, or is it not? Wilt thou give all diligence to make thy calling and election sure, or wilt thou still put all to the adventure, and leave thy eternal condition at uncertainties? Methinks, after so many glorious effects of Assurance have been opened, every one that nameth the name of Christ should be restless till he have it, and should go from ordinance to ordinance till he could say, *I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine* : Till he can see his Name written in the Lambs Book of Life : Till he feel the white stone in his hand : Till he taste the hidden Manna with his mouth, and find the Spirit witnessing to his Spirit that he may be of good cheer because that his sins are pardoned. I would take it for granted that so it shall be, were it not that the flesh will alway be drawing back from, and framing objections against every thing that requirerh diligence, and cometh not till after many Prayers and Endeavours. Endless it would be to attempt to answer all the cavils of slothful persons against the work I have been pressing ; Two it may not be amiss to take notice of.

Object.

Object. *We have known those who have gloried much in their Assurance, whose Assurance was never found to produce any of the fore-mentioned blessed effects.*

Ans. I have also known those who have boasted much of their great Love to Christ, and yet made no conscience of keeping his Commandments; this did never make me think that universal Obedience was not the fruit of true Love, but only that their Love was not true: Semblably, when I observe any who say they have Assurance, shewing forth their Assurance by none of the fore-mentioned blessed effects, I conclude their Assurance to be the Counterfeit Assurance or carnal confidence, known commonly by the Name of *Presumption*; 'tis to me so manifest, that he who hath Assurance will.

1. *Be above the tormenting fear of death,*
2. *Despise the perishing vanities of the world,*
3. *Sleight and despise the censures of the ungodly,*
4. *Express an holy boldness in his Prayers,*
5. *Take comfort in the Word and Sacraments,*
6. *Abound in Praise and Thanksgiving,*
7. *Kindly mourn for sin and watch against it,*
8. *Not regard cavils against the Truths, the power whereof he experimentally feeleth,*

That where I find not these, I adventure to say there is no Assurance: And I would have all the fore-mentioned particulars made use of in way of Examination, as well as Motive, that if any one do not find his perswasion of the goodness of his condition accompanied with them, he may thence,

as he hath the greatest reason, infer that it is not wrought in him by the Spirit of God.

Object. But is it not time enough to get Assurance hereafter? Will it not suffice if some time before a Man do depart out of this world he be sealed by the Spirit?

Ans. 1. Sure he that makes this Objection doth not believe what I have been all along asserting out of Scriptures concerning the benefits of Assurance, else he would be hugely desirous not to want it for one moment longer; it would be death unto him, to be without it till death seize on him.

2. No Man can have this Assurance but by the Spirit; now he is a most free and arbitrary Agent, blowing when and where he listeth: He who now refuseth his consolations, may perhaps want them everlastingly.

3. The longer any one stays without Assurance, with the more difficulty will he obtain it at last. The longer any one doth walk in the dark, the more hard thoughts doth he insensibly take up concerning God, and the more unhappily skillful doth he grow in disputing against his own consolations; the longer that the heart hardneth it self through the deceitfulness of sin, the more unfit is it to receive the Seal of the Holy Spirit of God. Whatever is brought against late death-bed Repentance, may be also brought against late death-bed Assurance; with this only difference, that whereas Repentance is necessary to the very being of a Disciple, Assurance is only necessary to his well-being.

Quest.

Quest. 6. *What means are to be used for the attaining of this Assurance?*

Ans. Before I direct to means, it will be needful that I premise some things.

1. That *I do suppose true solid Assurance to be intended in the Question.* As for Presumption, 1. It is needless to prescribe any means for the getting of it; 'tis like some ill weeds, which in some soils will grow, do the Husbandman what he will or can; Satan will both plant and water, and also give increase unto it; and so deep roots it taketh, that the very approaches of Death cannot pull it up. Nothing more usual then for Men that live under the Sun-shine of the Gospel, to drop out of a Golden Dream, out of a fools Paradise, into Hell. 2. If it were in the least needful to give any Directions for the attaining of this presumptuous perswasion, I durst not give them; for it is the work of Gospel Ministers to throw down to the ground all those buildings that are built with untempered mortar, and to pull those Pillows from under Mens heads on which they do sleep so securely; we should by all good means labour to vanquish Despair, but that is an enemy that doth but seldom meet us in the field, it hath slain at most but its thousands; the greatest example of it, *Francis Spira*, hath not left some Divines without hope that he is among the Sheep, and not the Goats: As for Presumption, it hath killed its ten thousands; it is the epidemical disease, and strengthens it self by almost every thing that we can say for the comforting of the truly tender conscience.

2. That

2. That for the attaining of Assurance there is no need that any new Rules should be prescribed, but only that the old should be put in practice : It is a sinful curiosity in people to look after, and in Ministers to advise to only or chiefly that which no Man ever thought of but themselves; or to account a Promise the less savoury, because another hath smelled to it before them. In a matter that almost all practical Divines have handled, I should suspect what is new and not heard of, and account that best which every one hath hit on: And it hath been some trouble to me to observe, 1. How some have made it the whole drift of their Sermons, only to lift up Saints above their discouragements, as if the generality of the very best Congregations did not more stand in need of a Purge then of a Cordial; 2. How the very same Men, through a desire to deliver something singular, have most strangely tortured Scriptures, and built their notions upon such loose and illogical Coherences, such uncouth Translations of the Original, as could not settle any but such whose trouble was seated only in their fancy.

3. *When all Directions are given and used, yet Assurance will not be had ordinarily, but by reflecting on the drift and course of our affections and actions.* He therefore that will not make a set and solemn business of it to examine his own state, must needs remain in uncertainty, or something worse then uncertainty. It must therefore be supposed, that all other Rules are given only to fit and prepare the Soul for Examination : I say to fit and prepare for Examination ; for though Examination be a duty

duty to all, yet is not proper or seasonable for all times : 'Tis no wisdom to behold a Mans face in troubled waters, nor booteth it to look for the sincerity of a small grace, amid many, and those frequently prevailing corruptions, any more then to look for a Needle in a Bottle of Hay. We are then ripe for examination, when we have well informed our selves about the terms of the Covenant of Grace, and know what makes a Disciple of Christ, and when the hurry and violence of temptation is pretty well over, and when by frequent acts we have had some experience of our selves. These things premised, I say, let him who would gain Assurance,

1. *Labour to bring himself to be content without Assurance till God see him meet for it.* By Contentedness I do not mean that he should sit down satisfied without it, or remit his care, or neglect the means appointed for the getting of it ; for 'tis not possible that he who doth truly prize and value Heavens joy should be at rest till his hopes of getting it are above his fears of losing it : But when I say he should be contented, I mean he should not grow impatient, not murmur and repine against God, as if he did him wrong because he lets him be in the dark, or as if he were unrighteous in hiding his face from him, and seeming to shut out his Prayers. There's scarce a more dangerous distemper then an hasty, over-eager, impatient desire of comfort, for it usually leads out of the good old way into the by-paths of error. As those who are impatient in a Fever, will needs suppose that their disease is rather in
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their Beds then in their Bodies, and therefore will often shift their beds; by which means though they find some present refreshment, yet they do indeed increase the Calenture: So doth he who is impatient under his want of comfort, go from one Minister to another, and at last says, why should I wait any longer? My want of comfort is not from me, but from the way and Religion in the which I have been brought up. Many an *Englishman* hath turned *Papist*, *Quaker*, *Antinomian*, *Separatist*, because these shew unto their Profelytes a more easie and speedy way to comfort, then can be got on the Principles of the Reformed Religion, which affords no comfort to those who are not *Christians* as well as *Protestants*. May we alway hold fast these Principles, lest God complain, as *Jer. 6. 13, 14.* *From the least to the greatest every one is given to Covetousness, and from the Prophet even unto the People, every one dealth falsely; they have healed also the hurt of the Daughter of my People sleightly, saying, Peace, Peace, where there is no Peace.* “Some one perhaps that hath read in “Popish Authors, That without not only Attrition but also Contrition there is no Remission, “may think that I do wrong them, whilest I “number them with those who do sleightly heal “troubled Consciences, especially seeing they do “require such a degree and measure of Contrition as is either intensively or appreciatively the “greatest; and they account it not so much as “appreciatively the greatest, till the Will doth “more esteem the detestation of sin, then the attainment of any good, or elaping of any
“evil.

" evil. But this notwithstanding, they have an
 " Art by which they can easily content their Dis-
 " ciples, and skin over their wounds ; for this
 " they deliver as a Tenent to be at any hand
 " maintained, That Christ by instituting the
 " Power of the Keys did consult Mans infirmity
 " appointing a way in the which he may have
 " Divine favour without Contrition (unto which
 " it is hard to come) by meer Attrition, if he do
 " but receive the Priestly Absolution ; that ob-
 " tained, carnal sorrow becomes to all intents
 " and purposes as effectual as the Godly sorrow
 " working repentance not to be repented of.
 " This is *Receptissimum n aliorum omnium axioma*
 " (not dogma) *quod Sacramentum suppleat ex opere*
 " *operato defectum contritionis*, saith *Gregorius de*
 " *Valentia, disput. 7. quest. 8. de Contrit. punct. 3.*
 " Can any one desire an easier Religion ? It is but,
 " when a Man feels some sorrow arising from a
 " slavish fear, betaking himself to a Priest, and
 " from him receiving Absolution, and then all old
 " scores are cut. Let me also add, That it be-
 " comes us under troubles more to desire grace then
 " comfort ; yea, not to desire comfort upon any ac-
 " count so much as this, that *the joy of the Lord may*
 " *be our strength* ; that being refreshed with the Oyl
 " of gladness, we may the more easily and swiftly
 " run the ways of Gods Commandments. Spiritual
 " comfort is desired carnally, if not desired in order
 " to service : *Psal. 51. 12, 13. Restore unto me the*
 " *Joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy*
 " *free Spirit ; then will I teach Transgressors thy*
 " *ways, and sinners shall be Converted unto thee.*
 " By

By his *free Spirit*, the Psalmist here means his Spirit to set him free from the *slavish fear*, either of God or Man; which usually makes us weary of our Lives, and yet horribly afraid to die: But wherefore doth he desire this free Spirit? not that he might be free from God's Service, but that he might be free to his Service; that being not in Bondage through fear, he might win others to the Faith, that he might be able to encourage others to walk before God in Holiness and Righteousness all their days: he that useth not his Comforts to this end, doth but turn the Grace of God into wantonness.

2. *A good way to gain Assurance, is to be thankful for what we enjoy already.* When Nathaniel was induced to believe meerly because he was told of his being under the Tree, Christ was so pleased, that he promised him, *he should see greater things than that*, Joh. 1. 50. So when we are thankful for the first dawnings of Light, God is so well pleased with that Thankfulness, that he causeth our Light to grow clearer and clearer to the Noon day, Phil. 4. 6, 7. *Be careful for nothing: but in every thing by Prayer and Supplication with Thanksgiving, let your Requests be made known unto God, and the Peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.* To him that is thankful for what he hath, shall be given, but from him who is not thankful for what he hath, shall be taken away even that which he hath. How can we more provoke God, then if we overlook and despise all our Mercies because we want some one thing which we have a mind

to, though no present meetness for it; yet so is God provoked by bad Men, and by good Men. Though *Haman* be by the King advanced above all the Princes, yet all avails him nothing so long as he saw *Mordecai* the Jew sitting at the Kings gate, *Hest. 4. 13.* and even the Father of the Faithful uttereth words not much unlike, *Gen. 15.* God bids him not fear, *for he was his shield, and exceeding great Reward.* But what doth he reply? *v. 2, 3.* *What wilt thou give me seeing I go Childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus; and behold to me thou hast given no Seed, and lo, one born in my house is my Heir.* What wilt thou give me? As if God had nothing to Reward his Servants Obedience with, but Children? As if he could not be better to them than many Heirs?

Obj. *If God should hide himself from me in Temporals, I could, that hiding notwithstanding, be thankful for Spirituals; But what have I to be thankful for, so long as I know not that God loves me with a special peculiar love?*

A. Is it nothing that thou art out of Hell, that thou art kept from running into all excess of Riot, that thou art kept from laying violent hands on thy self? nothing that thou art Born in *Immanuel's* Land, that thou hearest of the Covenant of Grace sure and well ordered in all things, that thou hast Ministers and Christian friends to help thee to lay hold of this Covenant? nothing that the Spirit hath brought thee under Convictious of Sin, and enclined thy Heart to seek out after the Gospel cure? Surely, if thou canst see nothing to be thankful for but Assurance, if thou shouldst

shouldest have Assurance it self, thou wouldest scarce be thankful for that, but quarrel at it, because it is not clear enough, or because others have more of it then thy self.

3. *He that wants Assurance must believe till he feel that he believes, and put forth acts of Love till he find that his love is sincere and unfeigned.* Direct Acts would be multiplied when we have not the comfort of Reflex Acts; this is a Rule given by all, and seems to be firmly grounded on that Famous place, *Isa. 50. 10. He that walketh in darkness and seeth no light, let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay on his God.* He that walketh in darkness, and seeth no light, is in as comfortless a condition as a Child of God can be in. What is the way to bring him into the light? Even to trust in the Name of the Lord, and to stay on God: That is, he must consider that Christ died for him, and that *he is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God through him:* yea, and that he hath promised, if he come, not to cast him out, and by expresse Commandment hath made it his duty to believe; and in the strength of these Considerations, the Spirit assisting, to cast himself on him, and lay hold of him so long till he find he hath him. Those who make the being assured that God is ours in Covenant, to be the onely, and the first ground of Reliance on God, do by Consequence make all Preaching in vain, and bring unto us a new Gospel. For suppose I had to do with an Unbeliever, what should I say to him? that he doth not believe, till he is perswaded that God is his in Covenant with him? Would not this be in effect

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effect to tell him, that he must die in his Unbelief? For how should he come to know himself to be in Covenant? Shall I tell him, because he is Elect? That cannot be known to him; nor if it could be known to him, would it be sufficient to enter his being in Covenant? For the Elect, till Renewed by Grace, are the Children of Wrath, as well as others. My business therefore is to convince such a Man, that if he die in his Sins, he is undone Everlastingly, and that his own Righteousness is so every way imperfect, that it cannot answer the demands of the Law; I must also call upon him to meditate on the free and full offers of Life and Salvation that are made in the Gospel, and let him know that it is his duty to lay hold of the hope that is set before him, and to follow such kind of Meditations with his Prayers till he feel his heart resolved to adventure himself on this bottom. But can any one so do? Without Grace he cannot; by Grace he can. And so did Job, Job 13 15. *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.* I, but Job, though destitute at present of the sense of God's favour, might remember his former loving kindness, and with such remembrances support himself. 'Tis possible he might: but the Soul that never had any sense of God's Love, may come to this pitch of resolution, nay, to this pitch of resolution it must come. For what else should it do? To continue in a Natural Condition brings Damnation inevitably, get out of it by his own strength no Man can. Tell him what Promises God hath made of Pardon, he'll reply, that whatever is promised as to Pardon, is suspended on a Condition,

which

which condition he finds not. But then tell him, there are absolute Promises wherein God promiſeth to beſtow Grace on the Graceleſs, here his hope begins to ſtir and revive. The Lord hath promiſed to take away the heart of ſtone, and to give an heart of fleſh: In that promiſe he hath not put my Name, but neither hath he excluded or put me out; he may do it for me as well as for another, therefore at his feet will I lie down, and no longer be unwilling he ſhould Rule in my Heart by his Law and Spirit, and whether he ever ſmile on me or no, (which yet I have reaſon to hope he will) I will have no other Lord or Maſter but himſelf, and in the uſe of all good means will I wait on him, and look up to him, till he write his Law on my Heart, and put his ſeal into my inward parts. And this leads me to a fourth direction.

4. *Let him that wants Assurance wait upon God in the uſe of all good means, Duties, Ordinances, till he ſhew his Reconciled Countenance to him.* I ſay all means, Duties, &c. not onely becauſe the neglect of one may provoke God to reject our attendances on him in the other, but alſo becauſe 'tis uncertain in which God will manifeſt himſelf.

1. Sometimes in Prayer he drops the Oyl of Gladneſs into the wounded Spirit, and indeed in this Duty as much as in any. Upon the Prayers of the Church *Peters* bonds were looſed; and could the Church be brought to as inſtant fervent Prayer for her doubting Members that are faſt held under the Chains of their Troubleſome Thoughts, we might find them ſooner delivered. But as Publick Prayers have this advantage, that by

them God is most honoured, so Private Closet Prayers have this advantage, that by and in them a Man hath fairer Opportunities to spread all his doubts before God in all their Particular Circumstances. Look on *David*, you would think he were not the same Man at the beginning and end of some of his Psalms. Before Prayer, as full of fears as the Night is of Darkness ; after Prayer, as full of Confidence and Comfort as the Sun is of Light. If our doubts do not prevail so far as to make us leave off Praying, our Prayers will prevail so far as to make us to leave off doubting. Of *Hannah* it is said, *That after she had prayed her Countenance was no more sad*, 1 Sam. 1.18. Had we more Praying, we should neither have so many jovial Sinners, nor so many dejected Saints.

2. Sometimes in the Reading or Hearing of the Word of God, a Beam of Light is let in that scatters all doubts and fears. The Spirit takes off the vail that is upon the Word, and the vail that is on the Heart, and then a Man can misinterpret the Scripture no longer, his Title to the Promise is no longer obscure. The Word, it is God's Power to Salvation ; 'tis the Instrument he maketh use of for the begetting, strengthening, confirming of Faith ; it answers all the Objections that Carnal Reason can raise against either the fulness or freeness of Divine Grace. Therefore when People have been the very next door to despair, by looking into this Record of God's Love, they have met with that which hath recovered their hope, and made them to say, *Who is a God like unto thee, pardoning Iniquity, Transgression and Sin ?*

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3. Sometimes God appeareth in Holy Religious Conference. *As Iron sharpeneth Iron, so doth a Man sharpen the face of his friend*, Prov. 27. 17. And therefore Christians, when they meet together, should encourage and strengthen one another in the Service and Worship of God, *Exhort one another daily, while it is called to day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*, Heb. 3. 13. Indeed, why is one comforted, but that he should comfort others with the same Consolations where-with he hath been comforted? *When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.* And that no Man may despise any serious Christian, though of the meanest parts, let it be considered, that God maketh use of the discourse of the foolish, for the Conversion and Confirmation of those that have been in great repute, for Learning. Thus the famous *Junius* was brought to be serious, by hearing the hearty discourse of a Country-fellow concerning Faith, and Repentance; and our own renowned *Bradford* comforted by the discourse of an unlearned Weaver. Thus will God have it to be, that no flesh may glory in his Presence, and that no Member of the Body may say to another, I have no need of thee.

4. In the receiving of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper sometimes the Lord doth Seal Men up to the day of Redemption. I have heard some say, that they did never receive of this Banquet, but they found some sensible Reviving by it; but they were such as made more Conscience of preparing themselves then most now a days do. Indeed the two main ends of this Ordinance seem

to be, Growth of Grace, and Evidence of Grace: Here the New-born Babe takes in that which makes him grow up to his just and full Proportion; here also the Soul in a Swoon takes in that Wine which makes it recover, and feel its own Life and Strength. No Man can open his Mouth 10 wide, but there is that in this Ordinance which will fill it; for in it the whole Covenant is sealed, Christ and all his Benefits made over to the worthy Communicant.

Object. None must come to this Ordinance but he who hath Assurance, and therefore I do ill to prescribe it as a means to beget Assurance.

Ans. This is a mistake; Men may without Sin come to the Lord's Table, and yet have no Assurance that they are in favour with God. All must examine themselves, and if it be clear that they are dead in Sins and Trespases, they much not in that Condition venture upon the Sacred Mysteries: But if a Man do upon Examination find that in him which doth usually accompany True Grace, though he be not without some fears and doubts, he may, he must receive; and the Sacramental Wine is the more proper for him, because of those Infirmities.

5. *Singing of Psalms also hath been much blessed by God to the quieting of Mens Minds, and filling them with the sense of his Love.* The Scholars of Pythagoras seem to have thought that Singing had some Natural Tendency to procure quiet rest, and freedom from ill affrighting Dreams; hence they used it every Night. And it is by the Ancient Fathers much commended,

as very powerful for the quieting of all passions, and easing of the mind of all its perturbations. Many have I read of, that in singing of Psalms have been sweetly affected with the highest consolations: So that it may well be wondred how this duty came in the late times to be so much disused in the Families of Persons professing Religion; Reasons indeed have been brought against it by some, but such as could scarcely lay hold of any but those who had a mind to be deceived. But what Lie would not they believe, unto whom God had sent strong delusions, as a punishment of their wantonness, and proud contempt of those Guides at whose mouths they were to enquire the Law? But it is hoped the folly of such Men is so manifested, that it will proceed no further. Sure I am, Singing of *Psalms* is a Duty, when rightly performed, that makes glad the Heart of God and Man; by it we *make melody to God*; the Prayer of the upright is his delight, but the Praise of the upright much more: The time is coming when Prayer shall be no more, but Praises shall never cease; 'tis an Heavenly work, and therefore no wonder if it give those who do use it such a taste of Heavens Glory, as maketh them forget all their sorrows. That *Luther* could quell all his fears by Singing the 46 *Psalm*, is almost in all Mens mouths; but we have a more sure and early example in Holy Writ, 2 *Chron.* 5. 13, 14. *When they lift up their Voice with the Trumpet, and Cymbals, and Instruments of Musick, and Praised the Lord, saying, For he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever; that then the House was filled with a Cloud, even the House*

of the Lord : So that the Priests could not stand to Minister by reason of the Cloud, for the Glory of God had filled the House.

Direct. 5. Let him that wants Assurance cast out every sin, set upon an universal course of Reformation ; for God will not give his Cordials to one that hath a foul Stomack. Those that dally and tamper with sin he will have no commerce with, *Rev. 2. 17.* To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden Manna ; and I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new Name written. These are all Metaphorical expressions, which being put together do amount to as much as Assurance ; but they are all promised τῷ νικῶντι, to him that overcometh, to him that rides on conquering and to conquer, vanquishing temptations, stedfast in the Faith. Let loose and wanton Professors talk as they please of their high enjoyments, and boast as they list of their raptures and extasies, we do know that they lie against the truth. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth, *1 Joh 1. 6.* But, If we have his Commandments and keep them, then do we love Christ ; if we love him, we shall be loved of the Father, and he will love us, and manifest himself to us, *Joh. 14. 21.*

More especially, Assurance goes along with such Acts of Obedience as do notably cross some carnal interest ; as,

1. *Acts of Charity* : a costly Duty, but very comfortable. God makes known his mercy to those who are merciful to others. *Isa. 58. 7, 8, 9, 10.* If thou deal thy bread to the hungry, and bring
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the Poor that are cast out to thy House; when thou seest the Naked, thou cover him, and hide not thy self from thine own flesh: Then shall thy light break forth as the Morning, and thy beaith shall spring forth speedily: And thy Righteousness shall go before thee, and the Glory of the Lord shall be thy reward: Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, *Here I am.* If thou draw out thy Soul to the hungry, and satisfie the afflicted Soul, then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the Noon Day, and the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfie thy Soul in drougt. The Hebrews were very Charitable Christians, chap. 6. ver. 10. We read of their labour of Love; they took as much pains in relieving the Poor, as if they had been all Deacons; and the Saints were the special object of their Charity, and to them they were Charitable for the Lords sake. Now this labour of Love was that on which the Apostle did build his perswasion, that they would not fall under that heavy doom he had denounced against Apostates, *I am perswaded better things of you, things that accompany salvation, things that cleave to salvation, things from which salvation cannot be separated, for God is not unrighteous to forget your labour of Love.* And this diligence and unweariedness in Ministring to the necessity of the Saints, is that which is commended by the Apostles as the way to attain to the full assurance of hope, ver. 11. *We desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope to the end.* No wonder God honours this Grace, which doth so highly honour Him, 2 Cor. 9. 12. *The Ministrati-*

on of this service not only supplieth the want of the Saints, but is abundant also by many Thanksgivings unto God, whilst by the experiment of this *Ministration*, they glorifie God for your professed subjection unto the Gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all Saints. Those who make it their grand plot and design to grow rich, do pierce themselves through with many temptations; and when they come to lie down on their sick-beds, they have no more ease then if they did lie down on Beds of Thorns: But those who have wisely considered the Poor, the Lord maketh their Beds for them in their sickness, needs must they lie down in Peace, and sleep sweetly. *It is a more blessed thing to give then to receive*; and therefore we should rejoyce not when we receive of the bounty of others, but when we have opportunities, to express our bounty towards those who do serve God in a worse condition then our selves.

2. *The Duty of Fraternal Correction* may possibly hazard a Mans repute and esteem in the world, and make him accounted a busie pragmatistical fellow, but it will endear us in the eyes and sight of God: God will give some eminent token of his love to those who are not ashamed of him in the midst of a crooked, adulterous Generation; Men of such courage are seldom known long to lie under any anxious fears of their eternal state.

3. *Acts of Mortification* carry in them a great contrariety to carnal pleasures; and the dearer it costs any one to part with sin, the more sweet and comfortable will it be to call to mind the victory got over that lust. None more chearful then they

they who deny themselves the chearfulness of jovial Company, who set a knife to their throats, and walk by the strictest rules of temperance. There's no assurance of the Crown albeit we do strive, if we do not strive lawfully; and lawfully we do not strive, if we be not temperate in all things. Even St. Paul could not keep under his fears of being a reprobate, longer then he kept under his Body, and brought it into subjection, 1 Cor. 9. 27.

4. *Peace-making* is a thankless Office, bringing not unfrequently on those who do attempt it, the anger of both the dissenting Parties: But nothing doth more clearly evidence unto us our Adoption, *Mat. 5. 9. Blessed are the Peace-makers, for they shall be called the Sons of God.* It is the observation of *Maldonat*, That to be called the Sons of God, implies somewhat more then to be the Sons of God, viz. That Peace-makers shall be owned and published as the Sons of God; they shall have a testimony in the Consciences of others, and in their own Consciences, that they are the Children of God.

5. *Loving of those that hate us*, blessing those that curse us, praying for those that Persecute us, are Actions very contrary to corrupt nature, unto which nothing is more pleasing then private revenge; but they have on them so much of the Image of him that maketh his Sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth his rain on the just and unjust, that they clearly evidence to him that is Conscientious in exerting them, his Adoption: He cannot long question his own forgiveness from God, who finds in himself an heart ready.

dy to forgive all who trespass against him ; for how should not the God of all mercies much more readily forgive, then he who hath but a very dram of mercy ? Let any one who is of a trembling heart, but go into his Closet, and there pour out his Soul in supplications for the pardon and salvation of those who Persecute him, he can scarce not thence draw a deal of Divine sweetness and secret sense of Gods Love. Unto such a one, sooner then to any other, would I promise settlement in a sure and glorious Peace. But revengeful projects are so black and hellish, as that they cannot consist with calmness of Conscience. God indeed doth not a second time put any sins into the Book of his remembrance, which he hath once blotted out : But a malicious revengeful Prosecution of our fellow Christians, may write over in our own Hearts and Consciences, all those sins that were by the Blood of Christ before blotted out ; for there is not as to all things the same reason of the Original of the Act of Indemnity kept in the hands of God, and the Counterpane of it kept within our selves.

Direct. 6. Let not any that would attain Assurance, give way to any unnecessary scruples or doubts about his condition ; or think that every thing which calleth for trouble and shame, doth presently make a Man an Hypocrite, or out of Covenant with God : It is therefore wisdom, as soon as any doubt ariseth, presently to take our selves to task, and see whether that which we have against our selves be such a matter as from whence we can rationally infer that God and we are still at enmity. I shall

shall not here take occasion to descend to particular doubts, for they are numberless; and besides, to answer doubts, in writing, availeth little, because a doubt as represented to a tempted Soul, scarce seems to be the same thing that it is when described on Paper; yet there are some general Rules that may be laid down, which if particularly applied, will be of great use for the silencing of doubts.

1. *I ought not to make my self an Hypocrite for that which the Holy Scriptures do no where make a Character of Hypocrisie.* If any consolation were tendred to me, had it not a foundation in the Scriptures, I were bound to reject it, and so am I to put away all trouble which comes not backed with some Scripture. By this rule our first Reformers did extricate themselves and others out of those labyrinths of desperation into which Popery had led them; and the Rule hath still a standing necessary use, and if observed, would set at liberty many who do account themselves bound.

2. *I must not make my self an Hypocrite for that which would make the whole Generation of the faithful Hypocrites as well as my self.* If I have a mind to gratifie my self in hard thoughts concerning my self, yet I ought not to have hard thoughts of every one else too. If I cannot see my own Name written in the Lambs Book of Life, yet I must not blot out the Names of all that make up the Body of Christ Jesus. We may therefore observe, if we have opportunity, the confessions of those who are, if any other, sincere; and if we do find but the same lustings to sin which they also complain

complain and acknowledg to be in themselves, w
may not for such lustings conclude our selves to
be out of Covenant with God: Or if we do thin
there is not security enough in this course, the
may we read over the Histories of those who hav
Gods Testimony in Scripture that they were hi
Children; and if we find that our spot is but a
theirs was, we need not for it fear our condi
tion.

3. *I need not trouble my self about that which
hath been already objected against me, and fully by me
answered.* If a controversie hath been long han
dled, the question truly stated, arguments on both
sides clearly produced, which way a Man hath
gone he will go, and not suffer himself to be re
moved from his Opinion by every new Book, in
which are only the Old Arguments in a new dress,
without any new additional strength. Sophisters,
if you give them an ear, will be wrangling infi
nitely; so will the Devil, and our own carnal
hearts: We must therefore do by them as Mode
rators do by Opponents after their Argument
hath been Answered; bid them either urge it fur
ther, or use some new Argument, or else be si
lent; else shall we both lose our precious time,
and also wrangle away our consolations. And
let all those who might see the Seal of the Spirit
on their hearts, did they not nourish needless
doubts, well consider, that they do by disquieting
themselves with childish irrational fears, commit
a very great sin. For, 1. *They do Rob the Spirit of
all the honour due unto him for the work that he hath
wrought in their hearts.* And can it choose but
grieve

grieve him, when he hath put forth power equivalent to that by which the World was Created, by which Christ was raised from the Dead, to find it overlooked and not at all acknowledged? 2. *He sins against his Soul in hindring the growth it might make were it not hindered by continual fears that the Root is still unsound.* Possess a builder with an apprehension that his foundation is not sure laid, and you will never perswade him to carry on his fabrick with any vigour; for he will still be thinking that when the Storms and Tempests arise it will fall, and the higher he hath raised it, the more shameful will be its fall. 3. By thus disavowing Gods work of Grace, *he doth dishearten and discourage his fellow Christians*, who observing him (of whom they alway had far better thoughts than of themselves) to doubt of his sincerity, do begin to question their own. 4. By nullifying in conceit the new Creature on such weak grounds, *he extreemly hardens the unconverted*; who will hence be ready to conclude, that no Religion lies deeper than the phansie.

Object. But if out of a fear not to deny a true evidence, I should trust to a false evidence, I were then eternally undone.

Ans^r. True. And therefore I am not now perswading any Man to slight any doubt bottomed either on Scripture or Reason, but only such as have all their force meerly from a palpable misapprehension of God, or of his Covenant. Let a Man fear where fear is; but let him not make that matter of fear, which is indeed ground of confidence: Let him not say, that God Loves

him not because he chasteneth him, when as he scarcely could be thought to love him if he did not chasten him; neither let him for every flaw or crack call himself reprobate silver, nor yet make every Blasphemous thought an unpardonable sin, which perhaps is so far from being an unpardonable sin, that it is meerly his misery, and not at all his sin; for if the Blasphemy arise not out of my heart, but be injected by Satan, I not consenting to it, 'tis my trouble, but his sin.

Object. But I have been told, that there is undiscerned as well as discerned Hypocrisie; and how then can I cease doubting?

Answ. Undiscerned Hypocrisie, is only in those who have no mind to discern; he that honestly proveth his own works, and heartily prayeth, *Search and try me, O Lord, if there be any way of wickedness in me*, cannot be in a way of wickedness, and not know it. God may for a season hide from us our sincerity, but prevailing Hypocrisie cannot, at least shall not be hidden from us, if we search carefully to find it out.

Quest. 6. Part. 2. How may he who hath Assurance do to preserve and keep it?

Answ. This is a right useful and weighty question: For [*Non minor est virtus, quam quærere parta tueri*] no less care and prudence is required to keep up Assurance, then to gain it. Little, as we are taught in Metaphysicks, is the difference betwixt *Essence* and *Duration*, *Creation* and *Conservation*. The Spirit, who is the Author of Assurance, is also the Carrier of it on; and those Duties and Ordinances which are the wombs in the
which

which it is conceived, are also the Breasts that do suckle and nourish it. Adviseable it hath been thought by some, to have some one promise unto which we may have recourse when troubles threaten; and *ceteris paribus*, it is most adviseable when Storms return, to flie to that promise which we did lay hold of and escape Shipwrack by when they did first arise. Much of what was said in Answer to the first Part of the Question, will also serve to Answer this second Part of it, yet I will speak somewhat to it distinctly. He therefore that would hold fast his Assurance, let him.

I. Labour to imprint on his heart, a true and firm knowledg of the Covenant of Grace. He that understands this, may (saith Luther) give thanks to God, and account himself a good Divine. He that understands it not, is neither good Divine, nor Christian: For therefore do our consolations not fail, because this Covenant is sure, and well ordered in all things. Two things especially there be in this Covenant, in which it concerns all, who would not be as the Waves of the Sea driven with every wind, to be well established.

1. Upon what terms we take God: And doubtless we take him to sanctifie and pardon and glorifie us, not to make us rich and wealthy in the World. Nay, if we understand our selves, we leave it to him, if he will but make us partakers of the Divine Nature, to despoil us, when it may tend to his Glory and our own good, to the utmost nakedness. To list our selves among Christs Disciples, is to profess that we have it in a readiness to forsake Father and Mother, Brethren and Sisters,

and whatever else is dear unto us. A believing meditation of this, will quench that fiery dart with which many a Godly Man hath been pierced, even to the utter loss of all his Assurance of Salvation: For what more usual then for Persons to conclude God hath forsaken them, because he hath somewhat lessened the stream of Temporal Mercies. Let an Angel from Heaven tell *Gideon the Lord is with him*, he'll not believe, as long as his People are in the hands of the *Midianites*; If the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? *Judg. 6. 13.* *Naomi* returned home laden with spiritual grace, yet she saith to her Neighbours, *Call me not Naomi, but call me Mara, for the Lord hath dealt very bitterly with me: I went out full, but the Lord hath brought me home again empty, Ruth 1. 20.* Upon such an account also *Job* complaineth, *That God had bidden his face, and did hold him for his enemy, Job 13. 24.* Could any thus argue, if they had not forgot that when they did take Christ, they did then also take up his Cross?

2. Upon what terms God receiveth us into favour, viz. Not on the terms of perfect, unfinning, but sincere and hearty obedience; and with express promise never to forsake us till we have forsaken him, which he reckons us not to have done, till we let some inferiour good have more of our heart then he hath. Through non-consideration of this, many one hath cast away all his hope, meerly because of sins of forgetfulness, inconsideration, passion; he is over-taken with anger, pettishness,

pettishness, inordinate fear ; he hath eaten some little matter more then the necessities of nature required ; he had some wandring thoughts in duty ; he omitted an opportunity of Counselling a friend : What then ? Therefore God is not in Covenant with him ? Nay, but thence nothing can be inferred, save only that he is not yet with God in Heaven ; for whatever is of frailty omitted or committed, hath a pardon on course granted unto it ; if any Man thus sin, *he hath an Advocate with the Father*, who hath procured for him that he may lay actual claim to eternal life, and make faithful plea for mercy. He therefore that would keep his Assurance, must, when sins are brought to remembrance, and set in order before him by Satan, thus say, were my sins presumptuous sins, enormous conscience-wasting crimes ? If so, then is all my actual claim to the promise of Eternal Life suspended till I recover my self again by renewed repentance ; my right and title to Heaven I may retain, but my present fitness for it is lost ; if they were not presumptuous sins, then may I with wonted boldness go to the Throne of Grace and call God Father.

II. He that would keep his Assurance *must thankfully and admiringly acknowledg the goodness of God in bestowing it on him.* God doth expect a tribute of Praise for every Mercy ; by not paying that tribute we forfeit the Mercy : But if after so great a mercy as Assurance we continue to be unthankful, we may expect, that as we forfeit our Assurance, so God will also take the forfeiture. Indeed what will a Man be thankful for, who is

not thankful for the sense of Gods Pardoning, adopting Love ? 'Tis not Heaven, but it is near of kin to Heaven ; 'tis not *the Redemption*, but it is *the first fruits of it*, and we know that Gods People were commanded to bring their Oblation of Thanksgiving when they received their first-fruits, becaule the first-fruits were a pledge and pawn of the whole Harvest, *Deut. 26. Blessed be God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead, to an Inheritance incorruptible, &c.* If God had only assured us, that we should spend Eternity in some *Limbus* unacquainted with pain and horreur (seeing we do know that by our sins we have deserved to receive our Portion with Hypocrites and Unbelievers, where there is weeping, wailing and gnashing of Teeth) Monstrous ingratitude were it not to admire so great Love : But if God have given us a well grounded hope that our Names are written in Heaven, that we have a title to that Paradise in comparison with which the Garden of *Eden* was but a Dunghill, this is such a mercy as is undervalued if it be thought on without astonishment ; if it do not cause us frequently with *David* to sit down before the Lord, and say, *Who are we, and what is our House, that thou hast brought us hitherto ? And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God, but thou hast also spoken of thy Servants for a great while to come ; and is this the manner of Men, O Lord God ? O how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for those that fear thee !* 2 Sami. 7. Psal. 31. 19.

But

But if any one who hath the Love of God shed abroad in his heart, do in a short time grow so stupid as not to allow himself time sufficient to view the height, depth, breadth, and length of that love, let him not wonder if he be brought back to the valley of the shadow of death and darkness.

III. *He that would keep his Assurance must keep himself from returning to sin, especially from returning to that sin upon which Conscience in its former accusations was wont to lay the greatest Emphasis.* Psal. 85. 8. *I will hear what God the Lord will speak; for he will speak Peace unto his People, and to his Saints: But let them not return to Folly.* If they do, instead of Peace they shall soon find trouble; for the sin which was so loathsome and uneasie as that we had no rest till we had vomited it up, must needs be far more loathsome and uneasie if we do return unto it after we have cast it up. If the Devil, after he hath departed for a season, return, he returneth not alone, but bringeth with him seven more Spirits worse, more defiling, more tormenting then the former.

Object. *Can a Man that is regenerate lose the Spirit of Regeneration?*

Ans. If he can, after grace received, sin with full consent, delight and contentment, he may: But some say that God is by promise engaged never to let him sin at such an high rate; others deny that there is any such promise. Which way my judgment in this controversie is inclined, I before shewed; but this is agreed on by all sober Divines, That a wilful relapse doth notably weaken the ha-

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bit of Faith, and make our own Spirits unable to testifie of our Adoption, and so grieve the Spirit of God as that he will not testifie, and give the evil Spirit advantage to suggest that we are utter reprobates, and in no capacity of being renewed by repentance.

IV. *He that would keep his Assurance, must be careful to keep the vows that he did make to God in the time of his trouble.* It seems natural to those that are in perplexity, to make unto God promises of such things as they suppose will be acceptable to him. We find in Scripture this to have been the practice of bad and good. But the Devil finding that at such times we have more affection than judgment, puts us sometimes to vow things in their own nature unlawful; such vows oblige not to performance, but only to repentance: No other is the obligation of vows made of things indeed not unlawful in themselves, but yet impossible to be done without neglecting the Duties of our places and relations. It is not unlawful to set apart one day in the week, besides the first, to the direct immediate Acts of Religion; but if my Body will not bear it, or if the necessities of my family will not consist with it, or if I am under Authority, and Governours will not permit it, then the separating of so much time for Religion becomes to me unlawful, nor can any vow oblige me to it. But the vows we have made of things in our power, and pleasing to the Almighty, must be performed, else they will be upon us, and break our peace so as nothing more. *When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it, for he hath no pleasure in fools. Pay that which thou hast vowed. Better it is that thou should*

should not vow, then that thou shouldest vow and not pay. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin, neither say thou before the Angel, it was an error; wherefore should God be angry at thy voyce, and destroy the work of thy hands? Eccles. 5. 4, 5, 6. Do not so much as defer to pay, for God hath no Pleasure in Fools. It is certainly a *μίσωσις*, and the meaning can be no other, than that he is greatly displeased with those who go about one while to flatter him in making a Vow, and afterwards to mock him in refusing or delaying to perform it. Say not before the Angel it was an error; Do not say it was imprudently made, that it was an Ignorance which thou art willing to expiate. Wherefore should God be angry? Wherefore should he foam? A dreadful place of Scripture, often to be thought on by those who after Vows make enquiry. Deliberation is needful before the Vow be made, and we sin if we Vow rashly: but it is one thing to sin in Vowing, another thing to Vow to sin; if we have sinned in Vowing, yet if the matter of the Vow was not something sinful, we must not alter; or if we will alter, we must not expect to dwell in the Lord's holy Hill.

V. He that would continue his Assurance, must bring forth such fruit after Assurance as he either did not, or could not, before Assurance. For the Rule holds here, *Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath* Mat. 13. 12. God will not long let his Candle shine on him who doth no more then what he might have done, had he remained in darkness.

But

But if when God hath lift up upon us the Light of his Countenance, we then walk as Children of the Light, our Light shall encrease; we shall not only be quiet, but also Rejoyce, and make our boast of him; we shall grow from a probable, to a certain and infallible hope of Heaven. God doth never from those who are in Covenant with him withhold those Influences that are *simply and absolutely necessary* for the avoiding of Sin, or performance of a Duty; when it is a Duty (affirmative Precepts do not oblige *ad semper*) but there are Aids or Influences, called by some *Arbitrary*, by others *Liberal*, by which a Man is enabled with less difficulty to abstain from Evil, and to lead an Holy Life; these aids are usually vouchsafed to the assured Christian: If, these notwithstanding, he yield to Temptations, or omit Duties, or perform them either sleightly or uncheerfully, ay, or if he do not encourage others to wait on God, it may well be expected that God should withdraw them, and give Sin and Satan some notable advantage against him. Those very Omissions and Commissions which would not provoke God to deny Assurance at first, may provoke him to recal it after it is granted.

Quest. 6. Part 3. *How may Assurance, when it is lost, be regained?*

Ans^r. This Question supposeth that Assurance may be lost; a supposition I am so far from not granting, that I humbly conceive it may be lost, and a Man not sensible of it. That it may be lost in part, and a Man take no great notice of the loss, will be easily granted; and why not in whole?

whole? Is it not possible that the great Duties of Self-Reflection and Examination should be for some time discontinued, or not impartially performed? If so, how easily may one judge that Liveliness and Enlargedness which ariseth meerly from Temper of Body, or increase of Gifts, or false Zeal, still to arise from the Testimony of the Spirit and a good Conscience? Histories do abound with Examples, of Men who meeting with Persons of great pretended Zeal and Piety, have been by them led into such Practises as could not stand with an actual Assurance of Pardon: yet till by some Providence the Vizor hath been pulled off the face of such Hypocritical Guides, they have not missed their Comforts. The Consolation of the Holy Ghost must needs be gone, only another Consolation did grow up instead of it, arising from Comparing themselves with others of different Perswasions from them, whom they saw to be worse then themselves, or from the Testimony and applause given them from their Companions whom they reputed alway the most Holy; *Measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, they are not wise or understand not,* 2 Cor. 10. 12. May all whom Satan hath got into this snare, by timely Repentance recover themselves; for it is of all snares the most dangerous, as being laid by the Devil Transforming himself into an Angel of Light, and his Ministers Transformed into Ministers of Righteousness.

Some there be who have lost their Assurance, and are sensible of that loss, and they are of two sorts.

1. Such

1. Such as have fallen into such Sins as do, till Repented of, make them unmeet for Pardon, and much more unmeet for Assurance.

2. Such whose Perswasion of Pardon might have still put forth it self into act, had they not looked on their Sins through a false Glass, and so unduly aggravated them. This latter sort are not to be favoured in their hard thoughts of themselves; they must have the falseness of those *Rules*, by which they mis-judge themselves discovered, and be made to know that they greatly dishonour God, whilst they measure his thoughts by their own thoughts, whilst they look on him as extreme to mark what Men do amiss, who is indeed Gracious and Merciful, slow to Anger, Pardoning Iniquity, Transgression, Sin. Yet care would be taken, lest while we endeavor to cure Men of this Injudicious (and therefore falsely so called) Humility, we cast them not into a more dangerous Disease, Spiritual Sloth and Security.

But it is the former sort of Troubled Souls to whom my Directions are designed, (though something may be said that will not be unuseful to the latter). Them I advise

I. *To bring themselves to a due and just sense of their condition.* I say, a due and just sense; for there are in this case two Extremes to be avoided,

1. *A sleighting of it.* They who err on this hand have either benumbed their Consciences; or else they have, through the Cares of the World and multitude of Business, so diverted their thoughts, as that Conscience hath no time to speak.

One

One would have thought that *David* after committing Adultery should have been a *Magor misfabib*, a Terrour to himself and all round about him: but he seems rather to be taken up with Sinfull Contrivances how he might cover that Sin, nor do we find any complaint of *broken bones*, till *Nathan* the Prophet had awakened him. To such I would say, "*Remember from whence ye are fallen.* Ye are fallen from the smiles to the frowns of a Father, of an Husband who can arm all the Creatures in Heaven and Earth against you, who can turn all sweet things into bitterness. Is it nothing to you, that for ought you know your Names are blotted out of the Lambs Book of Life? Nothing that you lie open to Eternal Wrath? What are your Pillows made of, that you can give either sleep to your Eyes, or slumber to your Eye-lids, and not reckon that God will break in upon you while there is none to deliver.

2. *Some have too deep sense of this Condition*, looking on themselves whilest in it as desperate, as having committed the unpardonable sin. There be two places in the Epistle to the *Hebrews* that have some aspect this way, these have horribly puzzled some of the Ancients, and are usually set home to the full by the Devil and a misgiving heart in this Evil day. To remove this error, I will not digress into an inquiry concerning the Nature and Symptoms of the unpardonable Sin, about which it is most certain some have discoursed very wildly; it may suffice to say, that a Presumptuous Sinning after the Grace of Assurance

rance received, though it cause a sore Wound, yet not an incurable Wound. *There is Balm in Gilead, a Physician in Israel.* Scriptures give Promises after such lapses, and furnish us with Examples of some who have recovered out of them; nay, it is thought by most, that such falls do not leave the Person thus fallen, dead, but only in a swoond; if so, he may somewhat relieve himself with remembring the days of the years of the Right Hand of the most High, and by means of Grace still left, act, being first acted, somewhat towards his own recovery: his Sin indeed is in some respects more hainous then any Sin of an Unregenerate Person, but yet if not quite deprived of the Spirit of Life, he may do that which a Man who is void of the Spirit cannot do. This leads me to the second Direction.

II. *Let him who hath lost his comforts, examine how and which way he lost them.* The cure usually is half wrought, when the cause of the Trouble is found out; and sometimes it is not difficult to find out the cause, viz. when Assurance goes away *Simul* and *Semel*, when all of a sudden a Man is carried out of the Wine-Cellar into the Dungeon, he can hardly be Ignorant what it was that provoked God thus to change his actings towards him; it can hardly be that it should be any thing but some notorious Sin lately committed by him. Such Sins are found without *secret searching*, Jer. 2. 24. *They are open before hand, and go before hand to judgment*, 1 Tim. 5. 24. These must humbly be acknowledged to God, and the Church too, if they be of that Nature as that the Church

by

by them hath been scandalized. Let wanton proud Wits argue as they please, and cavil as they list, God will own that Power he hath entrusted his Church with, and retain the Sins that she retaineth. But when Conscience hath brought in some such Sin as the cause of all the unquietness and trouble feared or felt, it must not rest satisfied in acknowledgment of that Sin ; a Man must by and through it go to the other Sins of his Life, and to Original Sin, the Fountain of every Sin. As *David*, when by *Nathans* message he was made to possess the Sin of Murder, from which he *prays to be delivered*, *Psal. 51. 14.* doth also confess the Corruption of his Nature, ver. 5. *Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.* Sometimes the Black Cloud hath been long a gathering, then it is the more difficult to find out what the Sins are that did contribute most matter toward it. And therefore more care must be used in searching our hearts, and trying our ways, and Prayer must be made to God, that he would shew unto us, *Wherefore he hath hardened our hearts from his fear, and caused us to err from his ways.* This was *Elibu's* Counsel to *Job*, *Job 34. 31, 32.* *Surely it is meet to be said to God, I have born chastisement, I will not offend any more : That which I see not, teach thou me ; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.* This searching must be continued till we find ; And when the *Achan* is found out, must we then sit still ? Nay, then must we bewail it before God : The evil way must be forsaken that caused God to forsake us ; That good way which when we left, God did leave

leave us, must we return unto. *Remember from whence thou art fallen, repent, and do thy first works,* Rev. 2. 5.

Obj. *Can one in this case do his first works?*

A. Not in their wonted Perfection: but in some sort he can, or at least he can go to him who reneweth strength to the weak, and comforteth those who are in Trouble. To spend time in whining complains, is more easie and more pleasing to those who have bruised themselves; but to stir up strength and be doing, is more safe and pleasing to God. I would not have deserted Souls chidden for crying out and roaring; How can they do other, *whose wounds stink, and are corrupt, whose sores run all the night long?* But they must not spend all their time in roaring, but get the broken Bones set, and make use of them, so shall they recover strength, and rejoyce.

III. *He that would regain his Assurance, must justify God until it return.* This is, if any other, in all Christianity an hard duty. Satan reckons that all whom God toucheth, not only in their Bone and Flesh, but also in their Spirit, will not fail to Curse him to his Face. Job did not do so, but he came as near it as one could do, and not do it; he Cursed almost every thing besides God, Job 3. 1, &c. Yea, many an hard thought did rise in his heart against God himself, and some hard words he uttered against him, as will appear to any that will Read his Book: the way to prevent all, whether hard Thoughts or Speeches, is to hold our Eyes on our Sins, and well and duly to consider their demerit: so shall we wonder that no worse

worse thing hath befallen us ; that we are not under Horror and Despair total and final, and remediless, *Psal. 51. 3, 4. I acknowledge my Transgression, and my Sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight. That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.* When we seriously and frequently think of Sin, and God against whom Sin is committed, we do soon clear him ; and when we justify him, it is not long ere he justify us, in his Court of Heaven, in the Court of our own Consciences, and in the Court of the Church too, (many of whose Members are apt to condemn those for Hypocrites against whom God writes bitter things.) While *Job* thought that God wronged him, God ceased not to scare him with dreams, and terrifie him with visions ; to shoot arrows into him, the poyson whereof did drink up his spirits. When he acknowledged, that God could do every thing, and that no thought could be withholden from him, and began to abhor himself in dust and ashes ; then God takes his part against his uncharitable friends, turns his captivity, and gives him twice as much as he had at first, *Job 42.*

IV. He that would regain his lost Assurance, must offer unto God what terms of agreement he pleaseth ; be glad to be received into favour upon the hardest Conditions. *I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son ; make me as one of thy hired servants, Luk. 15. 18, 19.* as one of thy hired Servants, who fare hard, and work hard, and seldom are admitted into the Presence of their Master ; he was content

to be any thing, so he might again be admitted into his Fathers house. This is the *genius* of Repentance, whether initial, or renewed; it makes a Man peremptory, never more to draw in the Iron Yoke of Sin, but willing to take any other Yoke that Christ shall think meet to lay on him; to put his mouth in the dust, yea, to lick the dust, if there may be any hope for him. Therefore *Absalom*, when he would counterfeit a strain of true Repentance, thus expresseth himself, 2 *Sam.* 14. 32. *Let me see the Kings face, and if there be any Iniquity in me, let him kill me.* He chose rather to be out of the World, then out of the King's favour. Whether *Dauids* favour were to be bought so dear or no, God's favour is; for as his anger is worse then Death, so his Loving-kindness is better then Life. He never duly estimated the Light of God's Countenance, who would not get one glimpse of it, though on Condition presently after to enter into the Chambers of Darkness. He never truly prized Communion with the Father and Son, who would not part with Houses full of Silver and Gold rather then not partake of it. *I have born nine Children* (saith that good Woman in Mr. Bolton) *with as great pain, I think, as other Women; I would with all my heart bear them all over again, and pass again every day through the same intolerable pangs as long as I live, to be assured of my part in Christ Jesus.* A very Hypocrite in some Tempest of Terror might say as much; but when this is become the frame of Heart, to will the Blood of Christ absolutely, it is not long usually ere God sprinkles us with it. Here many

ny may see whence it is that they spend the most of their days in grievings and groans, namely, because they will not rise up to the Terms and Conditions of Comfort. *Would they confess their Transgressions unto the Lord, he would forgive the Iniquity of their Sin: But if they will keep silence, let them not wonder if their Bones wax old through roaring all the day long, if Gods hand lie heavy on them day and night, till their moisture be turned into the drought of summer.* Would they ply their hearts with stirring thoughts, then they would revive; but if they be so lazy as never to commune with their Hearts, no wonder that they remain benumbed. Would they be humble, God would give them more Grace; but if they suffer their Proud Thoughts to exalt themselves against the knowledge of Christ, no wonder God sets himself against them. The Terms of the Covenant are made so low, that God cannot in honour stoop lower; if any one cannot bring himself to close with them, let him not think that God will find out new ways to satisfy his longing follies and lazy desires.

V. *He that would regain his lost Assurance, must be sure to pray hard.* Profane Wits make themselves merry with us, because commonly in all our Directions we bring in Prayer for one. They may as well laugh at Feast-makers, who in all their Entertainments furnish their Tables with Bread and Salt; or with Physicians, who make Aloes an Ingredient in almost every Pill. Some Duties are more peculiarly fitted to some one kind of Trouble, but Prayer Sanctifies and sweetens all, Jam. 5.

Is any man afflicted, let him pray. 'Εἰ τις ἁγνοῦται. If any Man suffer evil, of what kind soever, he will find it useful to betake himself to Prayer; especially in Soul-distresses and Desertions, Prayer must needs be advantagious, because it seemeth to be one main end God aimeth at in withdrawing himself, to make his People more fervent and frequent in Prayer. *Hos. 5. 15. I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face; in their affliction they will seek me early.* I will return to my place, I will as it were shut my self up in Heaven as if I regarded them not, till they seek my Face, that is, my favour; in their Affliction they will seek me early, betimes, with all speed, with care and vigour also, at such a rate as Men are wont to do things in the Morning. Hence we shall observe, That the Adopted Children of God have, when under Desertion, intended their Prayers. *David* did so, *Psal. 30. 6, 7, 8. Psal. 77. 1, 2.* So did *Heiman*, *Psal. 88. 1, 2, 9.* yea, of the Natural Son it is said, *That being in an agony he prayed more earnestly, Luk. 22. 44.* that Agony made him more to express his earnestness, then at other times: And when all other means have been used without success, Prayer hath presently effected the Cure, so that Man in *Gerson*, that studied against *Atheisme*, and could never get the better of it, at last prayed that God would help him in it, and he was clean rid of all his horrid Temptations this way, and was as really perswaded of the Truth of unseen things as of the chair he sat in. And many no doubt now alive have found by their own Blessed Experience, that when the most Rational

Arguments

Arguments have not cured their distrustful Thoughts, Prayer hath done it speedily ; they have kneeled down with the Spirit of heaviness, but did rise up cloathed with the garment of Praise.

Object. *I should have hopes that God had not cast me off, did he vouchsafe to receive a Prayer from me ; but this is that which heightneth all my Miseries, that when I spread forth my hands, he hideth his eyes from me ; yea, when I make many Prayers, he doth not hear.*

Ans^r. This is a sad case indeed, but no other then what many of the dearest Servants of God have complained of : The Spouse so complains, Cant. 5. 5. *I sought him, but I could not find him ; I called him, but he gave me no answer.* So doth the Church, Lam. 3. 44. *Thou hast covered thy self with a Cloud, that our Prayers should not pass through.* But perhaps this was some faint Prayer. Nay, it was a most vehement Prayer ; *When I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer,* vers. 8. And before these, David, Psal. 22. 1, 2. *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring ? O my God, I cry in the day time, but thou hearest not ; and in the night season, and am not silent.* And before him, Job ch. 30. v. 20. *I cry unto thee, and thou dost not hear me : I stand up, and thou regardest me not.* We must to avoid the dint of this Temptation, know, that it is our duty to pray alway, and not to faint ; and what the fruit of that will be, our Saviour hath told

us in a whole Parable, *Luk. 18.* The Repulses God either gives or seemeth to give unto our Prayers, should only intend our Devotion, and make Faith to gather up its strength: Therefore we shall observe in Scriptures, that it hath not been unusual for Christians to plead and Expostulate with God, in case of Desertion and not answering Prayer. *Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? Psal. 22. 1. and Psal. 80. 4. O Lord God of Hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the Prayer of thy People?* Many Places there be of the same strain and import: which Pleas and Arguings, because they do sometimes arise from that holy becoming boldness which is Purchased for Saints by the Blood of Christ, *Ephes. 3. 12. Heb. 10. 29.* but do also sometimes arise from a Sinful Sauciness made up of discontent and unbelief; therefore I shall, to compleat this last Direction, shew when a deserted Person is in a fit frame thus to plead with God, and also what are the Topicks from which Faith may argue.

A Man cannot believably plead and expostulate with God for not answering his prayers, till he be meet to receive that mercy he prayeth for. Whilest iniquity is regarded, God will easily answer our pleadings, and make us ashamed of our Expostulations. *Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our Souls, and thou takest no knowledge? Isa. 58. 3.* God easily Counterpleadeth, *vers. 4. Behold ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of Wickedness.* Your Fasts end in, and are second-

ed with Vexatious Suits and Brawls ;
 you misuse your Servants, and deal
 hardly with your Debtors not able to
 pay you. *Ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make
 your voice be heard on high.* As if he had said, "Ne-
 ver look to have your Fastings accepted, or
 your suits heard on high, so long as ye continue
 these courses of Vexation and Oppression.

*Vid. Gatak,
 in locum.*

Object. *If we must not plead till we be meet for
 Mercy, then we must never plead ; for our hearts being
 once made meet for Mercy, God bestows Mercy, and
 so no need to plead for it.*

Ans. Meetness doth not consist in *indivisibili*,
 but hath its Latitude and Degrees. God doth
 not delay to answer when he hath brought a Man
 to full fitness ; but he may and doth sometimes
 delay when he hath brought him to some fitness.
 That also may be a full fitness for one, that is not
 a full fitness for another ; and that a full fitness
 for the same Man at one time, that is not at ano-
 ther. 'Tis commonly said, and truly, that there
 are preparatory works to Conversion, but these
 are not alike for degree in all : those that have
 led orderly Civil Lives, are usually by a less Hu-
 miliation fitted for Faith, then those whose Sins
 have more Scandalized Religion : so are those who
 are designed for a Private Life, then they whom
 God calls to the Work of the Ministry. That
 very Repentance that would have fitted a Man for
 Assurance at first, will not fit him to have it re-
 newed, after he hath by any notorious revolting
 lost it. He also who is by God designed for ex-
 emplary strictness and eminent Mortification, doth

commonly come by his Assurance more hardly then he who was not designed to be so choice a Vessel. He therefore who lives without the sense of God's Love, though he have waited for it more then they who wait for the Morning Watch, let him think that God hath some gracious end in this dispensation, either to humble him afresh for former Sins, or to cause him the more highly to value Christ Jesus, or to make him a more able experienced Comforter of others : yet if he be not Conscious to himself of indulging any known Sin, let him not cease to Pray that God would restore unto him the Joy of his Salvation, nor yet humbly to Expostulate with God, and enquire wherefore He hides his face from him ; for these Expostulations and Pleadings are the ways in which, and means by which God giveth in Promised Mercies, and in and by which our own Faith is stirred up to lay hold of Christ, his Blood and Spirit. We must not by our pleadings design to make any change in God (*with whom there is not the least variableness, or shadow of turning,*) but to make a change in our selves ; our wrastring is not to overcome God, but to overcome our own Pride and Infidelity : yet we are said (Scripture accommodating it self to our Infirmary) to awaken God, to prevail over God himself, Hos. 12. 4. *He prevailed over the Angel, he wept, and made supplication.* By the Angel, almost every one now thinks we are to understand the *Angel of the Covenant*, God blessed for evermore. Let us see what it is from which we may so argue with God, as to have power with him, and prevail.

1. *We may argue with him from all the Names (suitable to our condition) by which he hath called himself in Scripture.* Many comfortable Names God proclaims himself by, *Exod. 34. 6, 7.* Look what it is that best hits our condition, by that we may plead with God. So we find *Moses* to have done, *Numb. 14. 17, 18, 19.* And now I beseech thee, let the Power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken. The Lord is long suffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression. Pardon, I pray thee, the iniquity of this People, according to the greatness of thy mercies. Scarcely can any deserted Persons condition be clothed with such circumstances, as that he may not be able to relieve himself, and argue with God by some one of those seven Names by which his good affection to repenting sinners is set out : They are seven skirts by the which he would have us to lay hold of him, and not let him go till he hath blessed us. In Scripture also he makes himself known by the Name of *Father*, by that Name the Church argueth with him, *Isa. 63. 16.* Doubtless thou art our Father. This was the hinge on which the Prodigals Faith did turn, *I will go to my Father, and say, Father.* *Dulce nomen patris* : Let every deserted Soul plead it with God. Thou art my Father ; and can a Father shut his Arms against a Son, formerly indeed disobedient, but now intreating mercy with tears, resolving to redeem the loss of former, with improvement of the time to come ? He that shall thus with true remorse and hearty grief bespeak God, shall not long be without the *best Robes, the Ring, and the Shoes,* without the most signal tokens of Fatherly Love. Obj.

Obj. *If I durst call God Father, then I were well enough, but this is my misery, that I have lost all that which sometimes made me to think he was my Father, and afforded me some boldness in my accesses to him.*

A. *If I should for once gratifie thee in thy hard thoughts concerning thy self, yet thou canst not deny but that God is thy Father on a common account, as a Creator. Plead that relation, for it will go a great way with God, especially if we be also within the pale of his Church, Isa. 64. 8, 9. But now, O Lord, thou art our Father, we are the Clay, thou art the Potter, we are all the work of thy hands. Be not wroth very sore, O Lord, neither remember iniquity for ever: Behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy People. An argument also used, Psal. 138. 8. Job 10. 8, 9. In all the places there is an allusion to Gods framing Mans Body at first, but perhaps something more is aimed at, viz. That they had been by God not only formed and fashioned in the womb, but also formed and fashioned into a Church, taken into Covenant, and so made a peculiar People, doubtless there is something to be made of this, that we are called by Gods Name, and that we are the Sons of his Handmaid, born in his House; some weight this nail will bear; if we hang all our Vessels on it, then it must needs break.*

2. *The very extremity of our condition is a very effectual plea with God: He useth it as an argument to himself, Isa. 57. 17. I will not contend for ever, neither will I be alway wroth, for the Spirit should fail before me, and the Souls which I have made. While no temptation hath befallen us but what is common,*

mon, God counts not himself so much concerned to regard us ; but when once we are tempted with such malice as we shall not long be able to bear, God will then soon either restrain, or refrain his anger : When therefore our spiritual troubles are come to a true, and not only an imaginary extremity, let us plead that with God : So seems *He-man* to do, *Psal.* 88. 14, 15. *Lord why hidest thou thy face from me? I am afflicted and ready to die ; from my youth up, whilst I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted.* God may suffer Soul-trouble to end in Distraction, and it hath sometime so ended ; but this is his strange work, and it will not displease him that any in whom his arrows do stick should pray to have them pulled out, lest they should drink up their Spirits, yea, lest the horror of them should deprive them of sense and reason.

3. *Deserted Souls may remember God of his former gracious dealings with them.* The multitude of the *Jews* cried aloud to *Pilate*, desiring him to do as he had ever done unto them, *Mark* 15. 8. They thought it would be unworthy of a Man in Authority to leave off to do Acts of Grace ; yet Men sometimes think they are not engaged to do more, because they have already done so much. But God doth do good, that he may do good ; his former loving kindnesles may be pleaded with him as arguments to move him to renew his mercies. Can any one that is distressed remember the time when God did wipe off the tears from his eyes, and bid him be of good cheer because his sins were forgiven him ? Thence let his faith plead as doth the Church, *Isa.* 63. 15. *Where is thy zeal, and thy strength,*

Strength, the sounding of thy Bowels, and of thy mercies towards me? Are they restrained? That tender affection and ability to do me good, of which I had formerly so many evident signs, and conspicuous Proofs; How come I now to hear nothing of it? How comes it about that those Breasts (so some read, and not Bowels) of consolation that I was wont to suck at so freely till I was satisfied, are now quite put up, though I need them more then ever I did? And to strengthen our faith yet more, we may mind God that he hath done greater things for us then that we ask; for he hath given us his Son to die for us when we were enemies; and will he not now give us the Fruits of his suffering? Did he not stick at letting his only begotten pay the dear price for our Redemption, and will he think much to let us only have our share in it?

4. *We may in desertion plead our own readiness to remit unto others their offences against us. This plea Christ (supposing us to lift up pure hands, void of wrath) hath put into our mouths in that most compleat form of Prayer, Luk. 11. 4. Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. Can we who have a Spirit in us lusting to envy, revenge, fury, bring our hearts to forgive our offending brethren to seventy times seven, and wilt not thou, O God, who challengest us to shew any God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his Heritage, Mic. 7. 18. Blot out our sins as a mist, and our iniquities as a thick cloud.*

5. *We may also plead the Compassion and Prayers of others for us.* Thus, Do all the Lords Ministers Bowels yern towards me? And shall Gods Bowels be restrained towards me? Do they declare themselves ready to loose all my sins, and shall God retain them? Will the Stewards shew pity, and will the Lord who gave them their Commission shew none? It is lawful to plead our own Prayers, much more the Prayers of others, Psal. 80. 4. *O Lord God of Hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the Prayers of thy People?* If thine anger be kindled against me, yet sith all the Church prayeth for me without ceasing, wilt thou not accept her? Didst thou ever say to the whole house of Jacob, *Seek ye my face in vain?* Papists speak much of a treasure of the Church made up of the satisfactions purchased by the Death of Christ, and of the Passions of the Saints, who in the days of their flesh suffered more then their sins required; the sufferings and satisfactions of these Saints may be applied to others, say they, and Church Officers have power to dispense them, and grant indulgences. Such a treasure we all reject with abhorrence, but yet according to the Creed, we acknowledg *a Communion of Saints*, consisting in the mutual help and assistance of one another by Prayer. Doubtless it may somewhat quiet and stay our troublesome Spirits, to call to remembrance, that when we dare scarce speak for our selves, there are of our fellow Christians that are crying for us, some making particular mention of us, (a favour often desired by St. Paul, Rom. 15. 30. Ephes. 6. 18, 19. Col. 4. 3. 2 Thes. 3. 1, 2.)

Others

Others mentioning us as Members of the same Body with themselves, known to God, though unknown to themselves.

6. *We may plead the ill use like to be made of our desertions by others, whether they be good, or bad.* This Plea, if we be sincere in it, is like to be very effectual, because it ariseth from a love to Religion, a fear lest it should suffer in our sufferings. God can so order it, and sometimes doth, that his servants Soul-straights do benefit those without, and those within. When the Spouse had caused her beloved to withdraw, *He put in his hand by the hole of the door, and her Bowels were moved for him,* Cant. 5. 4. She starts and follows after him, and enquires of all the met concerning him. Now what was the effect of this? The Daughters of *Jerusalem* ask ver. 9. *What is thy beloved more then another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?* And chap. 6. 1. enquire *whither he is gone? Whither turned aside, that they might seek him with the spouse?* And indeed, in reason one would think this should be the Language of by-standers: If a lost Christ be so precious, what is an enjoyed Christ? If a frowning Saviour be so desireable, what is a smiling Saviour. But oh, how seldom is it so? Do we not rather observe that hereby,

1. The good are much discouraged; apt they be to faint at those tribulations which do befall others, though for their sakes, Ephes. 3. 13. How much more for those tribulations that seem brought on their fellow Christians by Gods own immediate hand? In this case there is room for that ingeminated plea of *David*, Psal. 69. 6. *Let not them that wait*

wait on thee, O Lord, be ashamed for my sake : Let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel.

2. The bad are much hardned and made to rejoyce. Hence they say, in a sense quite contrary to Solomons sense, *He that increaseth knowledg, increaseth sorrow* ; and resolve to get no more Religion then what they can easily Master, and never to put Faith or any other grace on the trial : yea, hence they rise to hellish and most accursed insultations, Where is now your God ? Your Religion. From this Topick *David* doth often argue in his *Psalms*, *Psal.* 27. 11. *Lead me in a plain path* (wherein I may not scandalize my self) *because of mine enemies.* 38. 16. I said, *Hear me, lest otherwise they should rejoyce over me, and magnifie themselves against me when my foot slippeth.*

Double to these are the Pleas proper to deserted Souls, that may be picked out of the Book of *Psalms* ; but I forbear to gather them together, commending the Book it self, as the best Directory to furnish those who are in trouble, with fit praying-matter : Only let them be sure that they be sincere, using *Davids* Prayers with *Davids* heart, *i. e.* humbly, believingly, charging their Souls to wait on God ; so *He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry* : So shall he who now stands as an Enemy, or as a Stranger, say, *Is Ephraim my Dear Son ? Is he a pleasant Child ? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still : Therefore my Bowels are troubled for him, I will have mercy on him ; so shall the Wilderness and the solitary place be glad, and the desert*

desart rejoyce and blossom as the Rose, blossom abundantly, and rejoyce with Joy and Singing. The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with Songs, and Everlasting Joy, upon their Heads; they shall obtain Joy and Gladness, and Sorrow and Sighing shall flee away.

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; the Father of Mercies, and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation. *Amen.*

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